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Gender Differences in the Employment Expectations of Final Year Undergraduates in a University in Central China

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the gender differences in final year undergraduates' employment expectations, broken down by salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations, in a university in Central China. It firstly examines whether or not there are gender differences in these employment expectations. It then identifies factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in employment expectations.

The study employs the conceptual framework of 'choice and constraint', which means that male and female final year undergraduates are able to make their own choices towards employment expectations; however, their choices are limited by a number of constraints. It adopts a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, using an on-site self-administration questionnaire survey and a follow-up semi-structured interview.

The results showed that, overall, male final year undergraduates had higher salary expectations than their female counterparts. In terms of occupational expectations, both males and females preferred jobs in the 'Education' and 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupations. However, male final year undergraduates were more inclined to expect to work in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation and less likely than their female peers to expect to work in the 'Education' occupation. With respect to working region expectations, males and females behaved differently. Males tended to put the highly developed area of East China first; whilst females seemed to prefer to stay in Central China. There was also a higher likelihood of females expecting to work near their places of origin than their male peers.

Further explorations revealed that firstly, the economic roles being played in the family between the genders and the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in China's labour market appeared to account for these gender differences in salary expectations. Secondly, gendered job preferences might be related to the gender differences in occupational expectations. That is, males were inclined to highlight pay, job reputation, promotion and even power; whereas females were more concerned with work-life balance, job stability and working environment. Finally, it seemed that parents' expectations and the gendered orientations (males highlighting work-related issues and females underlining family ties) played a main role in shaping the gender differences in working region expectations.

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis has been written by me and is my own work.

Any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been fully acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

Name: Date:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
ACFTU	All China Federation of Trade Unions
ADB	Asia Development Bank
BBC	British Broadcasting Cooperation
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CERN	China Education Research Network
ECE	Early Child Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFKE	Guiding Framework for Kindergarten Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MOE	Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NPC	National People's Congress
NWCCW	National Working Committee on Children and Women
OWYW	Office of Workers, Youth and Women
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRK	Procedural Regulations for Kindergartens
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This mixed-methods study focuses on the gender differences in final year undergraduates' employment expectations in a university in Central China. The existing literature is more likely to focus on salary expectations of university students or graduates, most of which is based on the western context and little attention has been paid to gender differences in that area; while relevant research on gender differences in occupational and working region expectations is sparse. This thesis seeks to investigate gender differences in final year undergraduates' employment expectations, including salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations, and to identify factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations, using an on-site self-completion questionnaire survey and a follow-up semi-structured interview carried out in a university in Central China. The study adopts the conceptual perspective of 'choice and constraint' originally proposed by Crompton and Harris (1998), which means that male and female final year undergraduates are able to make their own choices towards employment expectations; however, their choices of employment expectations are limited by a number of constraints, such as, the gendered economic roles being played in the family, sex discrimination in the labour market, different job preferences between males and females as well as parents' expectations.

This chapter begins with a statement of the problem and then identifies the research questions in the study. It is followed by a justification of the key terms. It finally outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is not easy for university students to complete their passage from higher education into the labour market (Carvajal, *et al.*, 2000), especially in China where drastic changes have taken place in the past few decades, both in the higher education arena and the evolving labour market. With the expansion of China's higher education and China's economic transition, it has been difficult for university students to find a job, especially for female university graduates (Huang, 2007; Xu and Bu, 2007; Zhang, 2007), which results from a number of reasons (e.g., sex discrimination in the labour market, traditional gender ideas). Having a clear picture of final year undergraduates' employment expectations will be helpful to smooth the transition from academia to the labour force for students who intend to enter the labour market immediately after their higher education. Also, it is not possible to look at either men's or women's labour market participation without considering the position of the other (Jenkins, 2004).

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine whether or not there are gender differences in employment expectations, broken down by salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations. Meanwhile, the study will also attempt to identify the factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in employment expectations.

1.3 Research questions

The research problem can be answered by the following two questions:

- 1) Are there any gender differences in the employment expectations of male and female final year undergraduates?
- 2) If so, what factors have actually contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations?

1.4 Justification of the key term

To understand the term of ‘employment expectations’, it is important to differentiate the term from a similar term - ‘employment aspirations’. A number of studies have been undertaken entitled ‘employment expectations’ (e.g., Aratchi, 1974; Hudson, 2009; Kruss, 2003; Padgett *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 1970; Warkov, 1965) or ‘employment aspirations’ (e.g., Booth, 2003; Booth and Runge, 2005; Botcherby, 2003; Karmel, 1975). Although the scholars have not provided definitions of ‘employment expectations’ and ‘employment aspirations’, however, almost all of them have recognized that ‘employment expectations’ are more realistic than ‘employment aspirations’. In relation to the research questions in this study, I choose the term ‘employment expectations’ rather than ‘employment aspirations’, because ‘employment expectations’ are people’s anticipations about employment when their interests, capacities, values and opportunities are taken into account (Ginzberg *et al.*, 1951), rather than their desires in an ideal situation with no constraints. Therefore, ‘employment expectations’ are closer to the real outcomes of what people have expected. Given that my research respondents will be final year undergraduates, and ‘they are likely to be relatively knowledgeable and career oriented and, hence, would be likely to have made plans and formulated expectations’ (Blau and Ferber, 1991, p. 598), it would be more appropriate to use the term ‘employment expectations’ than ‘employment aspirations’.

Since there is a lack of a definition of the term ‘employment expectations’ based on the English literature, to my knowledge, I now switch to the Chinese literature where a small number of Chinese scholars have defined the term (e.g., Ru, 1988; Wu and Sun, 2005; Wu and Wu, 2007). According to Ru (1988), ‘employment expectations’ refer to people’s attitudes towards being employed, it consists of three parts: 1) whether or not a job can be found? 2) occupational orientation; and 3) employment achievement. Wu and Sun (2005) argue that ‘employment expectations’ mean

university students' lowest expectations of potential salary, welfare, career prestige, working environment, job prospect, etc. Wu and Wu (2007) suggest that 'employment expectations' can be illustrated by people's expectations of occupational orientation, regional choice and expected salary.

I am adopting Wu and Wu's (2007) definition of 'employment expectations' based on the following reasons: firstly, they have identified the three most important factors closely related to an individual's job: occupation, working area and salary. Secondly, it is more matchable to China's context. In China, what university graduating students are usually concerned about in employment are what kinds of job they are going to do (occupation), where (region), and how much money they could earn (salary). Therefore, in this research, 'employment expectations' mean an individual's belief about occupational orientation, region preference and expected salary under the condition that personal interests, capacity, preferences, employment opportunities and social circumstances are taken into account. In other words, the 'employment expectations' can be broken down to *occupational expectations*, which refer to what kinds of jobs graduating students expect to do; *regional expectations*, indicating which city or region they intend to work in; and *salary expectations*, which mean how much money they expect to earn monthly or annually. It is worth noting that the study will only focus on final year undergraduates' employment expectations of their starting jobs, rather than of their whole career trajectory.

I am focusing on employment expectations because people's employment expectations shape their long-term career choice (Holland, Gottfredson and Baker, 1990; Patton and Creed, 2007; Schoon and Parsons, 2002), which are a kind of reflection of people's future social mobility and career self-concept (Patton and Creed, 2007; Rojewski, 1995) and an indication of their life priorities and commitments (Regan and Roland, 1982). A comparison of male and female final year undergraduates' employment expectations will provide an indication of their 'career and family allegiances' (Regan and Roland, 1982, p. 223), and will reflect on some traditional norms about the roles of males and females. In this study, males' and females' salary expectations could help to examine whether or not the male

breadwinner model still prevail in contemporary China, their occupational expectations may help to decide whether sex segregation still exists in China; and finally, their working region expectations could be used as an indicator of labour mobility in China's labour market.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has eight chapters, which are made up of six sections: introduction, background, review of literature and theories, research design and methodology, research findings as well as discussion and conclusion.

Chapter one, 'introduction', aims to present a snapshot of the whole thesis. Therefore, it firstly provides a brief introduction to the study, and then switches to the 'statement of the problem' section. It is followed by the research questions. It then justifies some key terms employed in the study and finally has an overview of the thesis.

The purpose of chapter two 'background of the study' is to situate my study within a wide background. It includes six points which are broadly centred on the conceptual framework of the study 'choice and constraint', as will be discussed in chapter three. The first three points, which are gender and China's higher education system, the evolution of China's national policy for university graduates and China's efforts to improve gender inequality, could be regarded as factors that may facilitate male and female final year undergraduates to make their choices towards employment expectations of their starting jobs. However, those choices cannot be made in a vacuum; rather, they are socially and contextually situated. Therefore, a number of widely defined constraints are presented in the chapter, which comprise 1) gender differences in China's urban labour market, 2) motherhood penalty and childcare in China and 3) gender ideology in China.

Chapter three 'review of the relevant literature and theories' is concerned with grounding the study historically by critically reviewing the preceding work in the related area of the study and framing the study in a theoretical base. The review of

the relevant literature and theories is divided into three threads: individualist approaches, focusing on highlighting individual factors (e.g., choices); structuralist approaches that emphasize social factors limiting individual factors; a third camp where scholars underscore both choice and constraint as factors that have affected gender differences in the labour market. The second part of the chapter serves to address the conceptual framework ‘choice and constraint’ in the study.

Chapter four, ‘research design and methodology’, describes the research design and methodology employed in the study. Guided by the research questions and conceptual framework, this study employs a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, using an on-site self-completion questionnaire survey and a follow-up semi-structured interview. It explains the following issues: 1) how I designed the questionnaire and interview schedule; 2) how I sampled the research respondents; 3) how I conducted the pilot and main study; 4) how the ethical issues were considered; 5) how to address the validity and reliability of the study, and 6) how I analyzed the research data.

Chapter five, six and seven then present the research findings of the study. Following the idea that employment expectations have been broken down into salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations, the three chapters address the three sub-expectations respectively. Chapter five firstly analyzes whether or not there are any gender differences in the salary expectations, and also attempts to identify factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in the salary expectations. Chapter six firstly addresses whether or not there are gender differences in final year undergraduates’ occupational expectations, and works out factors that affect the gender differences in the occupational expectations. Chapter seven begins with examining whether or not there are gender differences in final year undergraduates’ working region expectations, and seeks to identify factors that have contributed to the gender differences in the working region expectations. Meanwhile, this study also attempts to situate the analysis of gender differences in these employment expectations into a wider background.

Chapter eight summaries the principal themes emerging from the data and then discusses them in turn. It discusses four main themes: 1) different economic roles being played by husband and wife, 2) sex discrimination in China's labour market, 3) various job preferences between males and females; and 4) the impact of parents' expectations on their children's working region expectations. Meanwhile, implications are made in the chapter. It also points out the limitations of the study and directions for further research.

By using the lens of gender differences in the employment expectations of final year undergraduates, the final chapter echoes the previous chapters in discussing the choice and constraint that final year undergraduates have encountered. Viewed in this manner, it finally proposes three points for achieving gender equality in China's labour market: raising women's consciousness of their socio-economic position, developing women's and men's awareness of gender equality and implementing anti-patriarchal initiatives in the labour market. It also argues that to achieve gender equality in China's labour market, a collectivist strategy is required and men should be united to work for this target.

Chapter Two: Background of the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, which is broadly related to the conceptual framework ‘choice and constraint’ that will be discussed in the following chapter. There are six points in this chapter, the first three of which are factors that may facilitate male and female final year undergraduates to make their choices regarding their employment expectations; while the other three points mainly focus on factors constraining males’ and females’ choices towards their employment expectations. This chapter will firstly discuss the facilitating factors including gender and China’s higher education system, the evolution of China’s employment policy for university graduates and China’s efforts to improve gender equality. Then, it will focus on the constraining items that comprise gender differences in China’s urban labour market, motherhood penalty and childcare in China as well as the gender ideology in China.

2.2 Background of the study

2.2.1 Gender and China’s higher education system

Since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (hereafter known as China) in 1949, China began to reconstruct its higher education. For many reasons, mostly political, the ‘Soviet Model’¹ was imported to China. Based on this model as well as China’s highly centralized economy, China’s higher education became very specialized. As a result, the number of comprehensive universities was reduced from 49 in 1949 to 13 in 1953 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2008). China began

¹ The Soviet Model refers to how people in the prior Soviet Union constructed their society, and it characterizes the political and economical system as highly centralized, see Wang (2005) for a review.

to expand its higher education during the ‘Great Leap Forward’² period lasting from 1958 to 1960. As a result, the number of colleges and universities increased, from 229 in 1957 to 841 in 1958, and up to 1289 in 1960 (Ouyang, 2004). In addition, the enrolment of university students increased to 961,623 in 1960 from 441,181 in 1957 (Bai, 2006). After this sudden and unprepared increase, China started to correct its mistake in the following years. So by 1963, the number of universities was reduced to 407 (Ouyang, 2004).

From 1978 onwards, with the establishment of the ‘Socialist Market Economy’³, higher education in China gradually became decentralized and somewhat more market-oriented. In 1985, higher education was granted more autonomy by the central government, and in the 1990s, there were many changes in higher education. Firstly, from the beginning to the end of 1990s, the amalgamation of higher education institutions (HEIs) prevailed. Secondly, students and their families began to pay tuition fees for the first time since 1949. Finally, in 1999, China began to implement the ‘Higher Education Expansion Policy’, which meant that China’s higher education started to enlarge its access to high school students. According to the statistics, in 1999, it had 1,596,800 new entrant undergraduates (China Education and Research Network (CERN), 2001). However, in the following years, the number of new undergraduate entrants expanded rapidly, so that by 2008, the comparable number increased to 6,575,646 (CERN, 2009).

During China’s higher education development, more and more women high school graduates were given the opportunity to enter HEIs. As shown in Table 2.1, women only comprised roughly one-fifth of the total higher education enrolment in 1950; the comparable proportion increased to one-third in 1990 and women university students almost equally shared the total higher education enrolment with their male counterparts in 2008. Women new entrants have outweighed their male peers in some

² The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign, and it tried to rapidly transform China from an agrarian economy to a more modern socialist economy, and it had quite a number of lofty goals that were hard to achieve, for example, it proclaimed that China would surpass the UK in industrial productions in 15 years and the US in 20 or 30 years. See Li and Yang (2005) for a review.

³ Socialist market economy means a sort of economy with a combination of socialism and market mechanism. China’s socialist market economy attempts to maintain ‘socialist’ in a number of ways, such as, state ownership, indicative (not directive) planning and investment in national key projects and the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) monopoly on political power. See Paker (1995) for a review.

universities. For instance, the proportion of female new entrants in the Hubei University of Economics from 2002 to 2006 was 51.34%, 52.93%, 53.28%, 55.86%, and 59.67%, respectively (Sohu, 2007). There were some cases as well in elite universities. For example, in 2006, female new entrants took 52.3 per cent in the Fudan University and in 2007, 55 per cent of new entrants in the Renmin University of China were females (China Youth Daily, 2007). Moreover, in terms of programmes studied, women students were not restricted to programmes like ‘Education’, ‘Fine Art’ or ‘Chinese’, rather, they have increasingly studied programmes like ‘Engineering’ and ‘Finance’ which were dominated by males a few decades ago (Zheng, 2002). However, Zheng (2002) has not presented any detailed information about the gender distribution in those programmes.

Table 2.1 Enrolment of undergraduates in China’s higher education by gender, 1950-2008

Year	Total enrolment	Percentage of male	Percentage of female
1950	13.87	78.8	21.2
1960	96.16	75.5	24.5
1965	67.44	73.1	26.9
1973	31.37	69.2	30.8
1980	114.37	76.6	23.4
1990	206.27	66.3	33.7
1995	290.64	64.6	35.4
1996	302.11	63.6	36.4
1997	317.44	62.7	37.3
1998	340.87	61.7	38.3
1999	413.42	60.3	39.7
2000	556.09	59.0	41.0
2001	719.07	58.0	42.0
2002	903.36	56.0	44.0
2003	1108.56	55.2	44.8
2004	1333.50	54.4	45.6
2005	1561.78	52.9	47.1
2006	1738.84	51.9	48.1
2007	1884.90	50.9	49.1
2008	2021.02	50.1	49.9

Source:

1. Zheng, 2002 (Data of 1950, 1960, 1965, 1973, 1980, 1990).
2. Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, 1996-2009.

Note: Unit in 10,000.

2.2.2 The evolution of China's employment policy for university graduates

China's economy has undergone a transition from a planned system to a more market-oriented one in the past few decades (Bishop, Luo and Wang, 2005; Gustafsson and Li, 2000; Li and Zax, 2003). During the economic transition, China's employment policy for university graduates has also experienced a trend towards the mutual choice system (*Shuangxiang xuanze*), departing from the national graduates allocation policy (*Guojia biyesheng fenpei zhengce*) (Agelasto, 1998). The evolution of China's employment policy for university graduates, generally, can be divided into three periods as will be discussed below (Zhou and Chen, 2005).

From 1949 to the middle 1980s, the allocation policy for national university graduates prevailed. Due to China's highly centralized economy, national planning had played an important role in deciding university graduates' destinations. In 1951, China published the 'Decision on the Reform of Educational System' (*Guanyu gaige xuezhi de jueding*) which regulated that university graduates' jobs were allocated by the Chinese government (Xinhuanet, 2010a). The policy continued to guide university graduates' employment issues in the following years. In 1981, the State Council ratified the 'Report on the Improvement of the Allocation of University Graduates in China's HEIs in 1981' (*Guanyu gaijin 1981 nian putong gaodeng xuexiao biyesheng fenpei gongzuo de baogao*) which re-emphasized that China implemented a national allocation policy for university graduates (Zhao and Wen, 2008).

Then, from the middle 1980s to the end of the 1990s, China's national policy for university graduates underwent a transition from an allocation policy to a more market-oriented one (Zhou and Chen, 2005). With the development of economic reform, the establishment of the 'Socialist Market Economy' and the reform of China's personnel system, the Chinese government then published 'The Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on Education Reform' (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiaoyu tizhi gaige de jueding*) in 1985 which stated

that China needed to change the policy that university graduates' jobs were totally assigned by the Chinese government (Xinhuanet, 2010b). Then, in 1989, the State Council of China approved 'the Programme of the Employment of University Graduates' (*Gaodeng xuexiao biyesheng fenpei gaige fang'an*), stating that the national allocation policy for university graduates should be changed into a social choice policy (*Shehui xuanze jiuye zhidu*) (Zhao and Wen, 2008). This was followed by the 'Outline of Education Reform and Development in China' (*Zhongguo jiaoyu gaige he fazhan gangyao*) published by the State Council in 1993, which said that China now had a policy that a majority of university graduates could freely search for jobs in China's labour market whereas a small number of them were still assigned jobs by the government (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE), 2010a). For example, students from teachers' colleges/universities and those who would work for national defence (Agelasto, 1998).

Finally, from the end of the 1990s onwards, China enacted and practised a market-oriented policy for university graduates. With the increasing maturation of China's 'Socialist Market Economy', the focus of national employment policy was shifted from plan-driven to market-driven. In 1999, the Ministry of Education of China published a programme named 'The Action Scheme for Invigorating Education Towards the 21st Century' (*Mianxiang 21 shiji jiaoyu zhenxing xingdong jihua*) (Zhou and Chen, 2005). It said that China aimed to establish a national policy for university graduates: under the guidance of national policy, university graduates and employers were able to operate 'freely' in the labour market and university students therefore could 'freely' search for jobs (MOE, 2010b), rather than take an allocated position.

2.2.3 China's efforts to improve gender inequality

It is a disturbing reality that no country has realized real gender equality so far, even advanced countries (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 2005). China is no exception to this. Since 1949, China has made great efforts to reduce gender inequality through the enactment of various laws, the implementation of different policies as well as the

establishment of wide-ranging national institutions (Asia Development Bank (ADB), 2006).

Laws. China has set up an extensive legal system for the protection of women's rights and development (ADB, 2006). The basis of the legal system is the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (ADB, 2006; World Bank, 2002), which was officially published in 1982 and revised in 2004 (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2010a). It states that women and men are equal, and are equally entitled to political, economic, cultural, social and familial issues. It also states that women's rights and interests are protected by the central government, and prescribes equal pay for the same work. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women (1992) is the core of China's legal system with regard to women's affairs (ADB, 2006), and states that implementing gender equality is China's basic national policy, China has to take action to eliminate discrimination against women. It also regulates that women's rights are equal to men's in political, economic, cultural, social and familial life (All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), 2010a). China has enacted a wide range of laws to protect women's rights and interests in general, for example, the Marriage Law firstly published in 1950 and then revised in 2001; and of laws protecting women's rights in employment in particular, such as the Female Employees' Labour Protection Regulations (1988) and Labour Law (1995).

In addition, China has also signed a number of International Labour Conventions regarding the protection of equal opportunities in employment (Cooke, 2001 and 2005), including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1980), which, for example, states that State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure gender equality (UN, 2007).

Policies. China has also implemented various policies to achieve gender equality goals. For example, China signed the Beijing Declaration and endorsed the Platform for Action at the 1995 UN World Conference (ADB, 2006; World Bank, 2002). In order to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly on Women, the Chinese government

enforced the State's Basic Policy on Equality between Men and Women and the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000). It then officially launched the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) in May 2001 (The Government of China, 2004), which covered six broad areas, including 1) women and the economy; 2) women in decision making and management; 3) education of women; 4) women and health; 5) women and law; and 6) women and the environment. In the 'women and the economy' section, one of China's objectives is to 'ensure women's equal rights and equal access to economic resources' (All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), 2009).

Since the enactment of the programme, local governments and relevant departments have also formulated regional and sectional plans accordingly to focus on local issues. For example, Zhejiang province published the Programme for the Development of Women in Zhejiang (2001-2005) and its successor (2006-2010) (The People's Government of Zhejiang Province, 2006).

National institutions. National institutions have played an indispensable role in ensuring the implementation of laws and policies that promote gender equality (The Government of China, 2004). There are general, as well as special, national institutions regarding women's issues in China. For example, The National People's Congress (NPC) of the Communist Party of China, acting as a general institution, is an increasingly crucial venue to bring women's concerns into public policy since the 1980s (ADB, 2006). As far as special national institutions are concerned, three institutions are of great importance, including the National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) under the State Council, the Office of Workers, Youth and Women (OWYW) in International and Judicial Affairs of the NPC and the ACWF. Taking the ACWF as an example, it has the following functions: 1) creating a national machinery to enhance women's status; 2) promoting gender equality; 3) enabling gender equality and 4) emphasizing women's economic development through access to employment and the marketplace (ADB, 2006).

However, although great efforts have been made to promote gender equality with the assistance of the laws, policies and national institutions, the goal of gender equality is far from achieved in China, because of a number of factors. Firstly, gender bias (mainly a pretty low proportion of women) in the judiciary (ADB, 2006; Cooke, 2001) and policies (Cooke, 2001 and 2005) have been widely recognized. As argued by Cooke (2001, p. 346), China's current laws and policies advocate a feudal social value (e.g., women are inferior to men) and attempt to prevent women entering 'the male's world'. From another perspective, there are a small proportion of women in China's judiciary system. For example, in 2002, only 3.6 % of chief prosecutors were women (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2003).

Secondly, lack of gender awareness (ADB, 2006) is also regarded as an impairment to gender equality in China. Due to the long-term shackling of women with feudalist ethics, Chinese women's consciousness of their socio-economic positions is very weak (He, 2008). Nowadays, although numerous women's organizations have been established, all of them are under the leadership of the CCP (Zhou, 2003), which makes women dependent politically. Because women have been marginalised in China's politics, only taking positions that are concerned with social issues, for example, health (World Bank, 2002); while males dominated key areas like security, finance (World Bank, 2002).

Having presented the factors that may facilitate male and female final year undergraduates to make their choices towards the employment expectations of their first jobs, it is time to discuss the constraining factors, since choice is not made in a vacuum, as will be discussed in the next chapter. There are a wide range of constraining factors, including in the public arena-gender differences in China's urban labour market, and in the private arena - motherhood penalty and childcare as well as the cultural aspect of gender ideology in China.

2.2.4 Gender differences in China's urban labour market⁴

2.2.4.1 Gender difference in labour force participation

Nowadays, the gender difference in labour force participation in China is not as large as that in many other countries (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). For example, in 2009, the female to male ratio of labour force participation in China was 0.91, which ranked 20th in the world (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). However, there is still a gender gap. As shown in Figure 2.1, the labour force participation of males (aged 25-54) was higher than that of their female counterparts (aged 25-54) from 1980 to 2008. This study chooses the 25-54 age group largely because they are the prime working group in China, given that men retire at 60 and women retire at 50 or 55 (women carders) (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 1999). Figure 2.1 also shows that before the 1990s, the labour force participation rate of females was quite low, which might result from China's economic reform starting at the early 1980s that has had a negative impact on women's work (Li and Li, 2008; Ouyang, 2003).

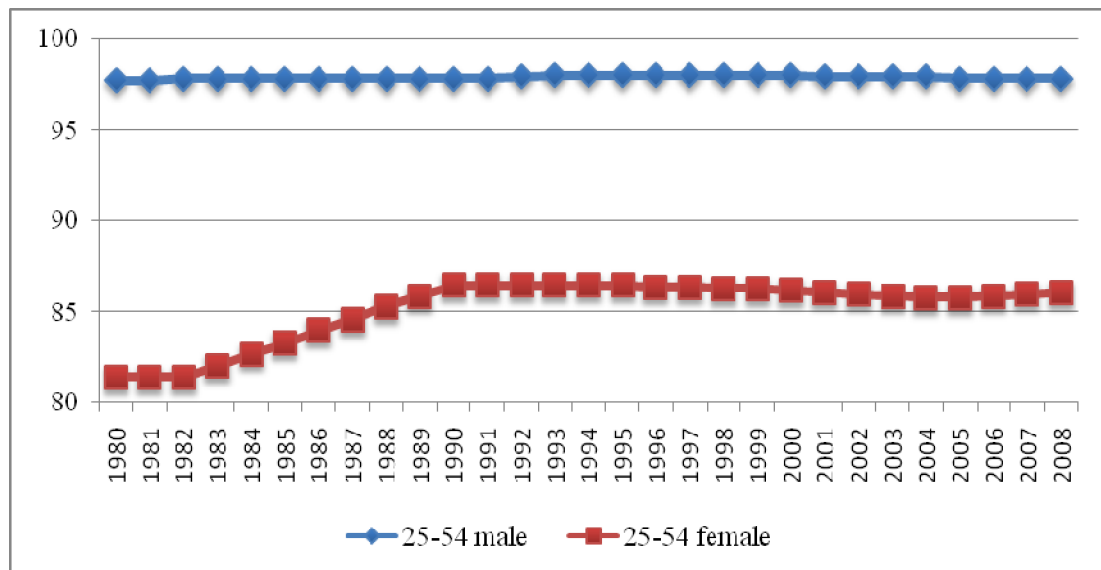


Figure 2.1 Labour force participation rate in China by gender, 1980-2008

Source: International Labour Organization, 2009.

⁴ Statistics about gender composition in China's rural area are not available; therefore, this study only includes data in China's urban labour market.

2.2.4.2 Gender earnings gap

China had a fairly equal distribution of income between males and their female peers before its economic reform due to the enforced egalitarian ideology (Meng and Miller, 1995). However, with China's economic transition, there is evidence that the gender earnings gap in urban China has widened (Gustafsson and Li, 2000; World Bank, 2002; Zhang, *et al.*, 2008). Scholars have presented various reasons for the enlarging gender earning gaps. For example, Zhang *et al.* (2008) argue that the broadening gender earnings gap is due to the decentralization of the labour market. In detail, they argue that with the increasing autonomy of enterprises, managers in those enterprises have practiced discrimination against women in setting earnings. Another reason is gender difference in education and training which also contributes to the gender difference in earnings (Bishop, Luo and Wang, 2005; Shu and Bian, 2003).

Nevertheless, with the upgrade of educational credentials, the gender earnings gap has narrowed (Gustafsson and Li, 2000; Wei and Yue, 2006). For example, based on the Chinese Urban Household Survey conducted in 2004, Wei and Yue (2004) show that the female to male earnings ratio was 43.3% for people with no schooling and it increased to 66.1% for their primary school educated peers. While for people that had junior middle school, senior middle school and college or above education, the corresponding ratios were 70.2%, 77.3% and 82%, respectively.

2.2.4.3 Occupational segregation by gender

Sex segregation in China's urban labour market still persists (Wu and Wu, 2009). With the transition of China's economy, sex segregation in the blue and semi-blue collar occupation remained, however, women increasingly made inroads into the

white-collar occupations (Li, C. L., 2009)⁵. Li, C. L. (2009) therefore argues that sex segregation in China is decreasing. However, as shown in Table 2.2, until 2008, women were still underrepresented in many occupations and heavily concentrated in others. Women comprised a very small proportion of workers in occupations like ‘Construction’, ‘Mining’, ‘Traffic, Transport, Storage and Post’, ‘Party Agencies and Social Organization’ and ‘Scientific Research, Technical Service and Geologic Survey’. On the other hand, women were concentrated in the occupations of ‘Health Care, Social Security and Social Welfare’ and ‘Accommodation and Restaurants’. From a dynamic perspective, some occupations remained constant. For example, during the period from 1997 to 2008, occupations like ‘Construction’ and ‘Party Agencies and Social Organization’ have remained dominantly occupied by males. However, others have varied particularly the ‘Education’ occupation where the proportion of females has been increasing, especially in primary schools where there were more female staff than their male peers in 2008, compared to 1997.

However, female-dominated occupations tend to offer lower salaries than male-dominated occupations. For example, the ‘Primary Education’ (52.9% women) and ‘Accommodation and Restaurant’ (54.5% women) occupations provided their employees with 25,929 RMB and 19,321 RMB in 2008, respectively (China Statistical Yearbook, 2009). By contrast, employees in the ‘Mining’ (80.6% men) and ‘Scientific Research, Technical Service and Geologic Survey’ (68.9% men) occupations got 34,233 RMB and 45,512 RMB, respectively (China Statistical Yearbook, 2009).

2.2.4.4 Gender differences in China’s graduate labour market

Although the proportion of female students at HEIs has been approaching that of their male counterparts (see Table 2.1, p. 10), gender differences still exist in the Chinese graduate labour market. To begin with, it is more difficult for female graduates to get a job than their male counterparts (Cao and Yue, 2010; Fu, 2009).

⁵ In Li, C. L.’s (2009) paper, white collar occupations include head of government, party agencies and enterprises, professional and technician, clerk and related persons; while semi-blue occupations mean commercial and service, blue collar occupations refer to workers in farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, and workers in industry, transport and related activities.

Table 2.2 Employment Composition of Urban China by Sector and Gender (1997 and 2008)

Occupation	1997		2008	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agriculture, forestry, farming of animals and fishing	37.7	62.3	36.3	63.7
Mining	25.9	74.1	19.4	80.6
Manufacturing	44.5	55.5	42.1	57.9
Production and distribution of electricity, gas and water	31.8	68.2	29.4	70.6
Construction	20	80	13.9	86.1
Traffic, transport, storage and post	27.5	72.5	27.3	72.7
Information transfer, computer services and software	37.1	62.9	38.8	61.2
Wholesale and retail trade	46.8	53.2	46.1	53.9
Accommodation and restaurants	58.4	41.6	54.4	45.6
Finance	41.3	58.7	50.1	49.9
Real estate	35.1	64.9	33.9	66.1
Tenancy and business services	40.1	59.9	34.1	65.9
Scientific research, technical service and geologic survey	34	66	31.1	68.9
Management of water conservancy, environment and public establishment	25.3	74.7	41	59
Resident services and other services	46.7	53.3	43.6	56.4
Education	42.5	57.5	49.5	50.5
<i>Primary education</i>	45.8	54.2	52.9	47.1
<i>Secondary education</i>	37.3	62.7	46.3	53.7
<i>Higher education</i>	38.9	61.1	44.1	55.9
Culture, sports and entertainment	42.1	57.9	41.7	58.3
Health care, social security and social welfare	56.3	43.7	59.8	40.2
Party agencies and social organization	23.4	76.6	27.7	72.3

Source: China Statistical Yearbook, 1998; China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2009.

Note: Unit in percentage.

For example, a survey showed that the employment ratio for male university graduates was 67.40% in 2007, compared with 59.80% for their female peers (Cao and Yue, 2010)⁶. Secondly, male graduates tend to get a higher salary than their female peers (Cao and Yue, 2010; Shi and Wang, 2009). For example, statistics show that in 2008 male graduates got a 2,249 RMB monthly salary six months after their graduation; the corresponding number for their female peers was 1,988 (Mycos, 2009). Thirdly, female graduates have frequently encountered sex discrimination (Fu, 2009; Zheng and Han, 2010). For instance, based on their survey, Li and Ye (2007) reported that around 70% of female graduates believed that sex discrimination existed during their job hunting process. Finally, there is still occupational sex segregation for female graduates (Shi and Wang, 2009). In particular, females were more likely to enter female-dominated occupations and less likely to enter male-dominated occupations. In 2007, there were 72.5% and 61.8% of female graduates in the 'Travelling Services' and 'Education' occupations, respectively. While in male-dominated occupations like the 'Construction' and 'Manufacturing' occupations, female graduates only took 22.9% and 24.4%, respectively (Mycos, 2008).

Addressing these issues, scholars have argued that a number of factors have contributed to female graduates' disadvantageous position in the labour market. Firstly, a traditional gender ideology that regards women as inferior and men as superior has had a persistent impact on current China (Zheng and Han, 2010). Therefore, there is a higher possibility of men valuing paid work compared with women (Aifeng, 2000; Zuo, 2003), even for university graduates, a well-educated group (Bu and Mckeen, 2001; Zhou, Dawson and Herr, 2004). Secondly, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms that regulate how to avoid sex discrimination or to monitor or punish sex discrimination (Fu, 2009; Zheng and Han, 2010). Indeed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, China published a set of laws protecting women's rights, however, these are not enforced (Cooke, 2001). Cooke (2001, p. 345) further argues that 'in terms of sex discrimination in recruitment, employment organizations are not monitored or sanctioned by any authority to filter out any illegal aspects of

⁶ The survey was conducted in 2007, covering 28 HEIs. It had 16,388 valid respondents, with 54.6 % of males and 45.4 % of females. See Cao and Yue (2010) for a review.

their recruitment process’.

2.2.5 Motherhood penalty and childcare in China

2.2.5.1 Motherhood penalty in China

Women have suffered a wide range of motherhood penalties in both developed countries (e.g., Budig and England, 2001; Harkness and Waldfogel, 2003) and developing ones (e.g., Dupuy and Fernández-Kranz, 2007). In China, a number of laws and policies protecting women’s rights, especially women’s maternity leave rights, have been enforced. For example, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women (1992) regulated that women workers cannot be sacked, and their salaries cannot be reduced because of their maternity leave and child rearing, rather, women should be specially protected during their maternity leave and child rearing period (ACFTU, 2010a).

However, women have experienced a ‘motherhood penalty’ to a substantial extent. Firstly, mothers in China are more likely to have a wage penalty than childless women (Hughes and Maurer-Fazio, 2002; Zhang, Hannum and Wang, 2008). For example, Zhang Hannum and Wang (2008) show that mothers’ monthly earnings were 63% that of childless women in their study conducted during the period from November 2001 to January 2002. They argue that this resulted from the work-family conflict of Chinese mothers, who have spent most of their time on housework, which was the case even when they had the same level of human capital (e.g., schooling, experiences, training and literacy score), political capital (e.g., the CCP membership) and time spent in their work as their male counterparts.

Then, mothers tend to have a relatively lower labour force participation than their peers who have never had a child (Maurer-Fazio *et al.*, 2000), which reflects the motherhood penalty from another perspective. In Chinese culture, women’s family role has been considered as their priority (Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005). Although mothers in China could have others’ help for child care and need to look

after fewer children than their peers in other countries in the world due to the One Child Policy, they still have the main responsibility for child rearing, which has caused their unavoidable intermittent labour force attachment (Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005; Hughes and Maurer-Fazio, 2002).

Finally, the motherhood penalty even extends to the period of recruitment. With the reform of welfare system in China beginning in the late 1980s, China has gradually established a tripartite system where individuals, employers and insurance companies share insurance payments (Croll, 1999). As a result, the employment cost for both women employees and their employers increases during their childbearing and child-rearing period (Cooke, 2001 and 2005). In this regard, the more women employees in a company, the higher costs employers need to bear (Cooke, 2001 and 2005). This consequently leads employers to discriminate against women job seekers especially those who have not yet had children, since employers know well that most women in China will have children sooner or later. Therefore, they will recruit fewer women employees than they need or try to find male employees instead.

2.2.5.2 Childcare in China

It is argued that there is a strong positive relationship between women's labour force participation and the availability of childcare, both in China (Kilburn and Datar, 2002) and outside (Powell, 2002; Wrohlich, 2006). As mentioned above, women in China have had very high labour force participation, so what about childcare in China?

Childcare in China has undergone dramatic changes during the past few decades. Firstly, the Chinese government published a number of policies and regulations regarding child care, such as the Act for Kindergarten Management (1989), Procedural Regulations for Kindergartens (PRK) (1996), Guiding Framework for Kindergarten Education (GFKE) (2001), and Guidelines Governing the Reform and Development of the Early Childhood Education (2003). For example, the PRK said that kindergartens in China were childcare and child education organizations, and were an important component of basic education in China (MOE, 1996). The GFKE

regulated that China's childcare system should walk on two legs, which meant that state-run kindergartens acted as the backbone and exemplar, and social forces operated as the primary providers (Du and Dong, 2008).

Then, the childcare system has evolved from a largely public system to a combination of public and private. Before the late 1970s, the childcare system was largely public (Du and Dong, 2008). However, with the establishment of the socialist market economy, the welfare reforms and especially the enforcement of the GFKE in 2001, private kindergartens have expanded massively. As shown in the Table 2.3, private kindergartens⁷ increased not only in numbers but also in percentages. For instance, there were only 30,824 kindergartens or 16.9 per cent in 1998, and the corresponding numbers increased to 83,119 and 62.1 per cent in 2008, respectively. However, the total number of kindergartens decreased to some extent from 1998 to 2008, which might partly result from a substantial cutback of support from the government and employer child care system (Du and Dong, 2008).

Table 2.3 Statistics of kindergartens in China from 1998 to 2008

Year	Total Kindergartens	Private	Proportion of private (%)
1998	181,368	30,824	16.9
1999	181,136	37,020	20.4
2000	175,836	44,317	25.2
2001	111,706	44,526	39.86
2002	111,752	48,365	43.2
2003	116,390	55,536	47.7
2004	N. A	N. A	N. A
2005	124,402	68,835	55.3
2006	130,495	75,426	57.7
2007	129,086	77,616	60.1
2008	133,722	83,119	62.1

Source: MOE, 1998-2008.

Finally, although mothers have the main responsibility for looking after children, they have not been exclusively caregivers (Short *et al.*, 2002). In China, there are alternatives for childcare. To begin with, grandparents are one of the most important

⁷ Kindergartens are normally for children aged 3 to 6 in China; while nurseries are responsible for children aged 0-2.

caregivers (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000; Short *et al.*, 2002). As aforementioned, the official retirement age for women is 50 or 55 (women cadres), which makes it possible for grandmothers to take care of their grandchildren in urban China (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000). Then, relatives are also available for childcare (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000; Short *et al.*, 2002). In addition, nanny (*baomu*) also plays an important role in childcare (Short *et al.*, 2002). For instance, in 2005, there were 115,000 nannies working in Beijing (People's Daily, 2005).

Alongside some achievements in China's childcare system, problems still exist. First, childcare is still not a priority for the Chinese government (UNICEF, 2007), therefore the government has had limited investment into it. For instance, it only accounted for 1.3 per cent of the total educational expenditure in 2007 (UNICEF, 2007). There is also a lack of special laws for early child education (ECE) (UNICEF, 2007), albeit China has published a number of regulations and policies related to the ECE. Last but not the least; scholars have claimed that whilst the childcare system in China has continued to play a role in promoting early childcare and education; it has downplayed its role in support of women's labour force participation (e.g., Du and Dong, 2008).

2.2.6 Gender ideology in China

2.2.6.1 Traditional view - *Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism*

During the feudal period of Chinese history, the cornerstone of law and custom was a Confucian ideology (Kristeva, 1975; Walstedt, 1978), which began to power China from the Han dynasty (202 B.C.) (Hinsch, 2003). When it applies to gender ideology, it is suggested that 'the traditional society was constituted by an essentially masculine value system developed over thousands of years' (Leung, 2003, p. 360). Leung (2003) also states that Confucianism accepted the subservience of women to men as natural and proper because women were generally regarded as useless or incapable of education. Women's social status could be portrayed by the 'three obediences': obedience to her father and brothers before marriage; her husband after

marriage; and her adult sons in case of widowhood (Dong and Li, 2007; Leung, 2003). Moreover, Confucian gender concepts of the 'virtuous wife and good mother' (*xianqi liangmu*) and 'exalting males and demeaning females' (*nanzun nubei*) were 'fundamental tenets to assess a woman's behaviour and aspirations, and her status relative to that of men' (Leung, 2003, p. 361).

Neo-Confucianism emerged in the Song dynasty (960-1,279 A.D.). Scholars have had quite contradictory ideas in term of whether or not it has an adverse impact on women's situation. For example, Yuan (2005) argues that women's situation became worse under the influence of Neo-Confucianism, and she (2005, p. 12) claims that 'women are in the lowest position and the most unworthy and least cared about'. A vivid description of women was 'women without any talents are virtuous' (*nu zi wu cai bian shi de*) (Yuan, 2005). On the contrary, Campion (2005) suggests that women began to recognize their intellectual abilities due to the effect of Neo-Confucianism, even though the only purpose for women to obtain knowledge was to serve their husbands. However, I would argue that gender inequality still existed with the emergence of Neo-Confucianism.

Women's subordinate status was reinforced by the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal family. As the patriarch, the eldest male was head of the family, and all his sons or brothers must be under the control of his authority, and in the same ménage with their wives and offspring (Stacey, 1976). In a patrilineal family, women would never have a chance to fully become a member of her distinct different families - her natal and her marital families. Living in a patrilineal family, women did not have the right to choose their surnames. As a child, her surname belonged to that of her father; while when she had children; the children's surnames belonged to that of her husband. In a patrilocal society, an arranged marriage was characterized as a key element to portray women's miserable life in old China (Stacey, 1976). Women never had opportunities to choose their spouses. Moreover, prenatal betrothal and child brides prevailed in old China.

Confucian ethical codes were attacked by Chinese women during the May Fourth Movement era in the early 20th century (Zhou, 2003). At that time, Chinese women began to raise their own voices, to seek the rights of education, romantic love and individual emancipation from patriarchal authority over women (Leung, 2003), to promote women's suffrage, and to denounce footbinding, sex separation and the inhumanity of arranged marriage (Zhou, 2003).

During China's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Confucianism was severely attacked (Zhang and Harwood, 2002). For example, Confucian hierarchical values were in conflict with the 'four big rights' (e.g., speaking freely, airing views fully, holding great debates, and writing big-character posters) advocated by the Mao government (Zhang and Harwood, 2002).

Despite some criticisms or attacks on Confucianism, it has been revived in current China to a substantial extent (Bai and Wang, 2009). The central message from Confucianism in current China is 'the subservient role of women and their uselessness in important matters of government' (Granrose, 2005, p. 40). For example, in 2008, only 21% of women worked in the parliament and women even took a fairly small proportion (9%) of the ministerial positions (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). What is more, as China is governed by the CCP, membership in the CCP denotes the individual's political loyalty to the Communist regime and has some important bearing on the rewards to the individual by the regime (Walder, 1986), such as promotion to positions of authority, high wages and in-kind incomes (Bian, Shu and Logan, 2001), and sponsorship for further education and job training (Li and Walder, 2001). Moreover, until 2009, among those CCP members, only 37.4% were women (The Central Government of People's Republic of China, 2010b), which further proved women's disadvantageous position in China.

2.2.6.2 Modern view - Marxism, Maoism, Deng's gender ideas and the equal opportunity model

As a socialist country, the overwhelming ruling ideology for China is rooted in

Marxism since the foundation of the CCP in 1921. Since then, Marxism has had a constant influence in China, even nowadays. The political theoreticians of CCP then combined some main tenets absorbed from Marxism with China's particular context, and formed their own ideologies, namely, Maoism and Deng's Theory, which are considered as the ruling ideologies after the foundation of new China (the People's Republic of China) in 1949. Gender ideology in China therefore was deeply influenced by Marxism, in particular, by Marx (1818-1883) and Engels' (1820-1895) speculations on the 'woman question', and by Maoism and Deng's Theory.

According to Donovan (1992), one central idea in Marx's theory is the idea of materialist determination, which holds that culture and society are rooted in material or economic conditions. This idea is clearly stated by Engels in *Manifesto of the Communist Party*:

In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone it can be explained, the political and intellectual history of the epoch (Marx and Engels, 1848, p. 8).

Another important concept in Marx and Engels' theory is 'class' (Donovan, 1992). Marx held that the proletariat class and the bourgeoisie class are two contrasting classes, and the conflict between them is irreconcilable (Donovan, 1992). Moreover, to realize full liberation, the proletariat class must unite to struggle with capitalism and build up the socialist society even communist society.

Marx and Engels did not specifically write books about women's problems (Li, 2000). However, their books, such as *The Manifesto of Communist Party*; *The German Ideology*; and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, scattered some ideas about women's issues (Li, 2000). Admittedly, Marx and Engels' ideas pertinent to women's problems were based on their theory. According to Li (2000), Marx and Engels' theory regarding women's problems can be summarized as follows: firstly, class oppression is the source of women's oppression, and then women's participation in the public labour force is the best

approach to resolving the problem of their oppression.

At the early period of the CCP, as they did not have their own ideology, they took Marxism as the ruling ideology in China and as the guide for China's revolution. Therefore, it is not surprising that when women intended to fight for their own rights, they were always told to put political issues and economic development as a top priority (Leader, 1973).

Since the foundation of new China, Maoism has increasingly become the governing ideology in China. Maoism, according to Li (2001), which evolves from Marxism - Leninism⁸ and develops Marxism - Leninism within China's peculiar context, is a series of summaries of experiences and theoretical principles that have been justified by China's social practice, applied to China's revolution and social construction, and it is the outcome of the CCP leaders' collective wisdom. With respect to gender issues, Maoism argues that:

- 1) Paying attention to the role of women as a revolutionary force;
- 2) Advocating the liberation of women and the use of women's labour power, however ignoring women's special needs and interests;
- 3) Insisting that women take an active part in the class struggle and in all political movements;
- 4) Emphasizing political work among women (Leader, 1973, p. 71).

Maoism argues that economic development was the best way to resolve women's problems, albeit he also emphasized women's affairs, and women's emancipation as a 'subordinate but integral part of the broader revolution in China in the spheres of economic, political and cultural life' (Leader, 1973, p. 79). Moreover, Mao's concept of gender equality was more appropriately regarded as 'gender sameness', which could be embodied by Mao's typical slogan, 'the time is different ... what man comrades can do, the woman comrades can also do' (Leader, 1973, p. 72).

From the 1980s onwards, Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), a great person worshipped by

⁸ Leninism is usually defined in terms of certain well-known revisions and innovations in Marxist theory and strategy, and it is based on Russian's populist's background, see Meisner (1971) for a review.

many Chinese people, creatively put forth the significant thoughts of ‘constructing socialist society characterized within the peculiar Chinese context’. Although he passed away in 1997, his theory has still persisted as a significant influence in current China. Deng’s Theory is defined as:

[a] combined outcome of the Marxism-Leninism and the reality and characteristics of contemporary China, and an inheritance and development of Maoism. It grasps the nature of socialism scientifically. It has a preliminary yet systematic answer of constructing, developing and consolidating a relatively backward socialist China in terms of its economy and culture in an era characterized by peace and development, and it is a systematic system of socialist theory with China’s characteristics’ (Li, 2001, p. 14).

Deng, like other key political leaders in China, has contributed some thoughts to women’s liberation. According to Yang (2006), Deng’s ideas regarding women’s liberation were: 1) Women’s liberation can be divided into two different periods: the junior period and the senior period, 2) the junior period of women’s liberation is linked to the class liberation and the abolition of private property. It is marked by the fact that Chinese women become the owner of the economic material, and become the master in political affairs. The achievement of gender equality legitimately signalled the accomplishment of the junior period of women’s liberation, and 3) the senior period of women’s liberation is connected with the senior period of socialist society. To achieve this period, it is indispensable to accelerate women’s development, and to speed up the gender equality in real life, rather than only in law. Moreover, it is pivotal to strengthen the consciousness of gender equality and create a good environment to guarantee gender equality.

Still, Deng’s ideas about women’s liberation prioritized economic development; he acknowledged that women’s liberation can still be subordinated to economic agendas (Yang, 2006). He always professed that economic development is the foremost task for contemporary China (Yang, 2006). What is more, sex discrimination has been increasing in the labour market since Deng’s reform (Leung, 2003). During the economic reform, women, especially those that were low skilled, were less able than men to defend their economic interests (Leung, 2003). Korabik (1993) also reported that more than two-thirds of employers prefer male to female employees, and even highly educated women graduates have difficulty in securing work assignments.

With the rapid transforms of socio-economic conditions in the past 30 years, the Chinese government, especially the current government, has adopted an equal opportunity model as a framework for achieving gender equality (Yuan, 2005). This could be illustrated by China's laws and programmes addressing gender issues. For instance, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China regulates that women and men are equal, and are equally entitled to political, economic, cultural, social and familial issues (The Central People's government of the People's Republic of China, 2010a). What is more, China also published the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) in order to 'better protect women's rights and interests, enhance women's overall competence, speed up the process of equality between men and women, and to bring into full play the role of women in China's socialist modernization drive' (Women of China, 2010). One of its objects is to 'to promote the realization of equality between men and women in political, economic, cultural, social and family life' (Women of China, 2010). However, a number of scholars have cast some doubts on the equal opportunity model. One example is Yuan (2005, p. 95) who argued that:

[T]he idea of equal opportunity does not help women promote their status if it only means equal competition in the rapid economic development without taking into account real inequalities in opportunity for different groups of Chinese women.

I would claim that China's equal opportunity model of gender issues is a kind of 'gender serving the nation' strategy (Wallis, 2006, p. 106). Take the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) for example; although it highlights women's equal opportunity to that of men, it has actually served the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China, as it once again has emphasized economic or social development over women's issues. In this case, it could be argued that the ruling gender ideology in China always values economic development, or other social issues, over women's problems, and has never taken women's issues as a special agenda to seriously deal with. As a result, gender inequality still widely exists in China, which leaves the Chinese government with a tough task.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, there are six points constituting the background of the study, which is broadly framed by the conceptual framework. Firstly, China's higher education system has undergone a rapid growth in the past few decades. As a result, more and more girls are given the opportunity to enter HEIs. Meanwhile, women students have also made inroads into programmes such as 'Engineering' which were dominated by their male peers a few decades ago. Secondly, with the economic transition and the personnel system reform in China, the national policies for university graduates have also experienced a dramatic evolution. Compared with their counterparts before the end of the 1990s, university graduates in current China can 'freely' choose their starting jobs to a great extent. Thirdly, the Chinese government has taken actions to address the issue of gender inequality, and indeed, during the past few decades, the government has made great efforts to reduce it. However, for a number of reasons, for example, lack of gender awareness (ADB, 2006), there is still a long way to go for China to achieve gender equality. Fourthly, although a large proportion of females are active in China's urban labour market, they have been treated unequally. Fifthly, alongside gender differences in the labour market, there are gender differences at home. Dealing with the acute demand of work and childcare (Short *et al.*, 2002); Chinese women have suffered from the motherhood penalty, even though they sometimes could get alternatives for childcare. Finally, under the influence of a number of different gender ideologies (e.g., Confucianism); women's status is by no means equal to that of their male peers in principle. Having presented the background of the study, I now turn to the literature and theories review section in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Review of the Relevant Literature and Theories

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines existing literature and theories regarding gender differences in the labour market by grouping them into three approaches: individualist approaches, structuralist perspectives and approaches emphasizing both choice and constraint. It also attempts to link empirical studies about gender differences in employment expectations to each theoretical perspective. After describing the relevant theoretical perspectives and empirical studies, it puts forward the conceptual framework for the present study, choice and constraint, and contextualises this into China's background.

3.2 Explaining gender differences in the labour market

Whilst women's position in the labour market has improved in the past few decades (Woodfield, 2007), women and men are still segregated in different occupations where women tend to have lower paid and lower status jobs compared to men (Hakim, 2004). Currently China has a higher female labour force participation than many other countries (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). There is evidence that the gender earnings gap in urban China has widened to some extent (Gustafsson and Li, 2000; World Bank, 2002; Zhang, *et al.*, 2008). For instance, in 1988, female-to-male annual earnings in full-time jobs was 84 per cent; and the corresponding ratio declined to 76 per cent in 2004 (Zhang, *et al.*, 2008). Statistics also show that the female to male earnings ratio in China continued to decrease from 2006 to 2009 (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2006-2009). What is more, sex segregation in China's urban labour market still persists (Wu and Wu, 2009). However, as argued by Li, C. L. (2009), the segregation has been decreasing, with

more and more women making their inroads into white-collar occupations.

Scholars have proposed a variety of perspectives to explain gender differences in the labour market, which generally can be grouped into two main approaches: individualist approaches, which tend to emphasize individual factors as explanations of gender differences in the labour market and structuralist perspectives, focusing on social factors that constrain or limit individual factors, for example, choice (Roos and Gatta, 1999; Woodfield, 2007). It is noteworthy that the differences between individualist and structuralist perspectives for explaining gender differences in the labour market do not necessarily mean that there are fundamental ontological differences between the two (Hodgson, 2007; Woodfield, 2007), rather, the differences lie in 'where analytical and explanatory priority is granted' (Woodfield, 2007, p. 13). There is also a third approach where scholars focus on both choice and constraint as factors that have affected gender differences in the labour market (e.g., Crompton and Harris, 1998; McRae, 2003).

3.2.1 Individualist approaches

Individualist approaches to explaining gender differences in the labour market are rooted in individualism which argues that 'all social phenomena (their structure and their change) are in principle explicable only in terms of individuals - their properties, goals and beliefs' (Elster, 1982, p. 453). Theorists argue that gender differences in the labour market should primarily be explained through an understanding of individuals (Roos and Gatta, 1999; Woodfield, 2007). Within this broad group, there has been a debate over whether social phenomena should be explained purely by individuals alone or by a combination of both the individual and the relations between individuals (Hodgson, 2007). Individualist approaches in this arena, however, seem to give some emphasis to extra-individual factors, albeit often implicitly, but the analytical focus is on individuals (Woodfield, 2007). Generally, neo-classical economic theories of human capital and rational choice, as well as preference theory, belong to the individualist approaches.

Neo-classical economic theories of human capital and rational choice. These theories argue that workers are rational and labour markets function efficiently (Anker, 1997). They also suggest that people invest in their own capital (e.g., education, on-the-job training) with the hope that their investments will finally pay off for them economically (Wharton, 2004). The theories have been used to interpret the gender earning gaps (Blau and Ferber, 1992; Browne, 2006; Mincer and Polachek, 1974; Roos and Gatta, 1999) and sex segregation (Anker, 1997; Becker, 1981/1991 and 1985; Polachek, 1981; Woodfield, 2007) in the labour market.

With regard to the gender earning gaps, Neo-classical economic theories of human capital and rational choice argue that gender differences in earnings mainly result from males and females having different productivity in the labour market (Blau and Ferber, 1992). Scholars argue that males and females bring different human capital, for example, education, on-the-job-training and work experiences, or other factors facilitating productivity, to the labour market (Becker, 1985; Davies, Mosher and Grady, 1996). Proponents of the theory attribute the gender pay gap to the domestic division of labour in which females spend more time and effort than males looking after children and dealing with other household tasks (Davies, Mosher and Grady, 1996; Nakamura, 1990; Walby, 1988).

In respect of sex segregation in the labour market, advocates of this theory contend that women choose occupations that require lesser skills and are less penalised if work is interrupted by childcare and these occupations are primarily female-dominated (Polachek, 1976 and 1981; Zellner, 1975). They also argue that those occupations have higher starting wages and lower wage growth, with a lower depreciation of discontinuous work histories than male-dominated occupations (Trappe and Rosenfeld, 2004).

Only a few studies have been carried out about the employment expectations of pupils and students (Webbink and Hartog, 2004). Major and Konar (1984) conducted a study using a questionnaire survey with 50 management students including 31 males and 19 females in the State University of New York at Buffalo. They found

that male students generally expected about 16.5 per cent higher salaries than their female counterparts at career-entry and 46 per cent higher at the career-peak. When the underlying reasons behind gender differences in salary expectations were explored, they suggested that career path was an important factor affecting gender differences in salary expectations. In Major and Konar's research, they used the term 'career path' to mean that males and females had different further education plans, differing timetable of full-time work and various occupational choices, all of which were closely related to human capital in the labour market. They noted that females were more likely than their male peers to work in personal sectors, which offered lower salaries than high salary sectors, for instance, management.

Major and Konar's research has been expanded or replicated by a number of scholars. For example, through a mail questionnaire survey of 388 final year undergraduates (205 males and 183 females) sampled in two Midwestern state universities in the US, Smith and Powell (1990) found that male final year undergraduates' expected salary was \$10,000 higher than that of their female peers ten years after their graduation. They have also argued that the gender gap in pay expectations could be related to the fact that females were less likely to pursue professional degrees after their undergraduate programmes than their male cohorts. These findings have been further confirmed by other studies. With the help of telephone surveys based on 1,203 college seniors with 518 males and 685 females,⁹ Jacobs (2000) found that female final year undergraduates only expected 72.1 per cent of their male peers' expected salary when they were 30 years old in the US. He further argued that this was because male final year undergraduates had quite different education plans from their female counterparts, which was that male final year undergraduates were more likely to pursue degrees in Medicine, Law and Business; whilst their female peers tended to study Education and Nursing programmes.

Scholars have also carried out research to elaborate other aspects of the career path factor that may lead to gender differences in salary expectations. As far as differing timetables of full-time work are concerned, scholars tend to have different ideas.

⁹ Jacobs claims that he has 1,205 research samples, but I could only find 1,203 samples based on the information he provides, see Jacobs (2000) for a review.

Through a study carried out in the College of Commerce and Business Administration at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, Blau and Ferber (1991) sampled 388 participants, and their data suggested that female final year undergraduates expected a similar salary to that of their male counterparts upon graduation, but not later on. In their data, although females planned to work fewer years than males, Blau and Ferber argued that those differences did not explain the observed gender differences in salary expectations. However, Heckert *et al.* (2002) had a different view. They used a mail survey to sample 371 college students in the US, with 110 males and 261 females, and they concluded that females expect a lower salary at career entry and peak, than men do. They, however, have not found significant differences between males and females regarding expected years of full time working and educational degree expectations. They concluded that the only difference between the genders was time out of the workforce for childrearing, with females predominately taking the child-care responsibility that might result in gender differences in expected salary.

Then, as suggested by Orazem, Werbel and McElroy (2003), career planning, measured by the extent that respondents have integrated their academic and work experiences into their career planning in their study, also contributes to gender differences in salary expectations. They carried out a survey of 92 male and 117 female final year undergraduates in the Iowa State University in the US, and they examined gender differences in salary expectations for these final year undergraduates regarding their first jobs and found that males' expected pay exceeded that of their female peers by about 7 per cent.

Alongside these quantitative-oriented studies focusing on gender differences in salary expectations, scholars have also conducted qualitative research under the umbrella of human capital theory to address the gender differences in expected salary. For example, Machung (1989) interviewed 17 male and 13 female final year undergraduates and found that male final year undergraduates tended to expect higher salaries than their female cohorts both for the first jobs and at the career peak, and she further argued that the gender gap in salary expectations widened

significantly during the respondents' life span. However, one of her explanations for this was that males were inclined to study programmes that could offer good pay, for example, Business, Engineering and Applied Math; while females were more likely to major in Humanities and Social Sciences. She contended that '[B]usiness and Engineering currently are one of the best routes to a well-paying job; the Social Sciences and Humanities one of the worst' (Machung, 1989, p. 41).

Neo-classical economic theories of human capital and rational choice have faced criticisms. Firstly, the theories have been criticized because of the assumption that there is a perfect labour market (Anker, 1997; Blackburn *et al.*, 2002); therefore it has not taken into account issues like discrimination or fluctuations in the labour market. They rest on the assumption that 'individuals are "free" to make rationally maximizing decisions in a competitive labour market' (Crompton, Hantrais and Walters, 1990, pp. 330-331), which has been challenged by labour market segmentation theory (e.g., Mallier and Rosser, 1987) and the feminist theory of patriarchy (Walby, 1990), arguing that the labour market is structured. Secondly, the theories also ignore the complicated factors that contribute to decision making (Browne, 2006), for example, gender stereotypes in the labour market.

Preference theory. This theory was developed by Hakim (1998, 2000 and 2004), who argues that the theory offers a theoretical basis to understand women's choices between productive and reproductive work. Unlike traditional theories that treat women as a homogenous group, Hakim (2000) regards women as heterogeneous, instead. Hakim (1996 and 2000) shows that women at all levels of education and in all social classes choose one of three lifestyles: work-centred, home-centred, or adaptive. Work-centred women are only a small proportion and they focus on competitive activities in the public sphere. For those work-centred women, family life is not their priority (Hakim, 2006 and 2008). Adaptive women would like to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either, and they want to enjoy the best of both worlds (Hakim, 2006 and 2008). They are the largest group among women, and are found in substantial numbers in most occupations (Hakim, 2006 and 2008). The third group, home-centred women, is a

minority group, and they prefer to give priority to private life and family life after they get married (Hakim, 2006 and 2008).

Preference theory also argues that in prosperous modern societies, such as the USA and Britain, women's preferences become a central determinant of life choices, especially the choice between a focus on activities related to children and family life or an emphasis on employment competitive activities in the public sphere (Hakim, 2006 and 2008), and also become the principal determinant of employment patterns (Hakim, 2000). Meanwhile, as well as emphasizing personal preferences, Hakim (2000) does not deny the impact of structural or institutional factors on women's employment. She, however, argues that the social-structural factors, especially social class, constraining women's choices are of declining importance (2000, 2006 and 2008) with the evidence that:

[I]n the prosperous modern societies that permit a much greater variety of lifestyle choices than in the past, preferences become a much more important choices than in the past, when economic necessity or relative affluence was generally the dominant force shaping women's employment decisions. In particular, the combination of the contraceptive revolution, the equal opportunities revolution and changes in the workforce mean that in the new scenario women have genuine choices in how to shape their lives (Hakim, 2000, p. 169).

Hakim further argues that social structural and cultural influences are just influences, rather than 'coercive powers' (2000, p. 170). Therefore, Hakim claims that 'people can choose to reproduce or transform social structures' (2000, p. 170), and she offers evidence that in the 1990s, young Japanese women have had just one child to show their rejection of the terms and conditions of motherhood that is to have and raise children as their primary social roles in a patriarchal Japan.

Preference theory was to some degree tested by two national surveys carried out in Britain and Spain (Hakim, 2002 and 2003). For example, using the 1999 British survey of 1,691 men and 1,960 women to test the classification of women's lifestyle choices and behaviour, and to generalize the taxonomy to 'sociological research on women's employment' (Hakim, 2002, p. 440), Hakim found that 'lifestyle preferences are a major determinant of fertility, employment patterns, and job choice' (2002, p. 428).

Hakim's preference theory has been criticised. The first criticism comes from arguments claiming that preference theory has paid too much attention to choice, and therefore overlooked the fact that choice is not completely free, rather it is performed within a set of constraints (Crompton and Harris, 1998 and 1999; McRae, 2003). For example, Hakim argues that people's social class is becoming less important in determining their employment. However, empirical evidence in Britain refutes this argument because it shows that in 2008, in terms of hourly salary, men with higher professional and managerial jobs was 2.5 times higher than that for men with routine jobs, whilst the corresponding figure for their women peers was 2.9 times higher (National Equality Panel, 2010). Secondly, it is suggested that labour markets operate in different places and in various ways (Peck, 1996) and Hakim's preference theory is mostly based on Western contexts so it cannot be generalized. Thirdly, Blackburn *et al.* (2002) claim that preference theory has not taken into account the power and choice of employers. The functioning of labour markets is really complex; alongside acknowledging employees' roles in the labour market, employers' interests and needs also need to be given emphasis (Blackburn *et al.*, 2002). The interaction between the demand side of employers and the supply side of employees is ubiquitous in the labour market; one cannot function properly without the other.

To sum up, individualist approaches have been criticised because they minimize, even sometimes ignore, the influences of extra-individual factors. Neither Neo-classical economic theories of human capital and rational choice nor preference theory has paid sufficient attention to extra-individual factors, and many sociologists argue that there are fundamental problems with individualist approaches (e.g., Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977; Woodfield, 2007). For example, Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) argue that the relationship between attitudes and action is far from linear and rational. Instead, we need to understand the gendered pattern of attitudes and behaviours and the gendered structural and individual constraints and facilitators when addressing gender differences in the labour market (Woodfield, 2007).

3.2.2 Structuralist perspectives

Structuralist perspectives for explaining gender differences in the labour market in particular, retain the basic principles of structuralist perspectives in general. They contend that social organization, rather than individuals, is the focus of research and treat social organization as imposing constraints on individuals (Abrams, 1982; Giddens, 1979, cited in Wharton, 1991, p. 376). Therefore, structuralist perspectives trace gender differences in the labour market ultimately to the social and personal constraints individuals need to confront. Structuralist perspectives include labour market segregation theory, patriarchy theory and gender role socialization.

Labour market segregation theory. Labour market segmentation theory has evolved from the first generation to the fourth (Jenkins, 2004). Normally, Doeringer and Piore's work in the 1960s can represent the first generation of labour market segmentation theory, which develops the notion of a dual labour market based on the US context. That is, the primary labour market, with stable, secure working conditions, favourable job prospects, scope for promotion and high wages (Mallier and Rosser, 1987), which is usually occupied by white men (Jenkins, 2004). On the contrary, the second labour market, with unstable working conditions, poor prospects or low wages (Mallier and Rosser, 1987), is filled by women, ethnic minority workers, the disabled and young people (Jenkins, 2004).

The second generation of labour market segmentation theory argues that the segmentation of the labour market is a 'capitalist strategy' (Jenkins, 2004, p. 10), which intends to maintain control over the production process (Gordon, 1972; cited in Jenkins, 2004, p. 10; Peck, 1989). It also argues that the function of all the labour market segments is to limit the competition for jobs to employees who are already working within the segment (Ashton and Maguire, 1984), and consequently, movement between segments is difficult (Jenkins, 2004).

The third generation of labour market segmentation theory has increasingly begun to explore the fundamental dynamics of the labour market, and it is suggested that there

is no single institutional dynamic (Peck, 1996); rather, gender differences in the labour market can best be understood by means of a number of perspectives (Rubery, 1992). As a result, it states that 'a full appreciation of women's position in the labour market could only be gained if it was acknowledged that the two spheres, those of home and work, interpenetrate, each conditioning each other' (Jenkins, 2004, p. 17).

The fourth generation of labour market segmentation theory has realized that the family is a major factor in influencing women's decisions to enter the labour market through the negotiation of women's dual roles (Jenkins, 2004). Peck (2000) also argues that work and home are not hermetically sealed and separate spheres that they were assumed to be. On the contrary, work and home can interpenetrate via various methods which strongly influences men's and women's behaviours in the labour market (Peck, 2000).

Briefly, early labour market segmentation theories (the first and the second generation) tend to focus on the separated labour market in order to explore men's and women's participation in that labour market. However, later labour market segmentation theories (the third and the fourth generation) begin to recognize that a better understanding of men's and women's behaviours requires an integrated view which is based on not only the labour market, but also the home.

Like other theories regarding women's subordination in the labour market, labour market segregation theories have also been criticised. For instance, Anker (1997) argues that labour market segregation theory does not explain why occupations are segmented by sex, and it also fails to consider 'a number of critical, non-economic and non-labour market variables and forms of behaviour, mainly because they lie outside the competence (and often interests) of economists' (p. 323). Moreover, it is argued that labour market segregation theory can only help to explain sex segregation in US companies, which thereby lacks a wider generalization (Walby, 1988).

Patriarchy theory. Unlike theories arguing that it is females' position in the family

that has brought them less commitment to paid work than their male cohorts, feminist patriarchy theory contends that females' disadvantages in the labour market result from men's active exclusion of women (Walby, 1986). Hartmann and Walby are the most influential scholars in the area. Hartmann (1976) has firstly placed patriarchy as a crucial factor for explaining women's lower position in the labour market, and defined patriarchy as men's domination of women, especially men's control of women's labour. Moreover, Hartmann (1979 and 1981) highlights occupational segregation as the key mechanism used by men to restrict and constrain women's access to paid work, which consequently makes women financially depend on men.

Walby has developed Hartman's theory of patriarchy, and she defines patriarchy as: 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women' (1990, p. 20). Walby (1990) also categorises patriarchy into two groups: private patriarchy that excludes women from paid work and forces them to devote their time to domestic work; and public patriarchy, which argues that women have been collectively exploited by the employers who have paid women lower wages than men. Also, Walby (1990) has identified two different patriarchal strategies in employment: the exclusion strategy aiming to prevent women from getting access to the area of paid employment; and the segregation strategies which focus on separating women's work from that of men and on preventing women's promotion to a higher position.

As far as China is concerned, women have unavoidably encountered quite a number of restrictions and constraints on paid work. Firstly, women have been excluded from particular jobs in the guise of protecting women's rights and interests. For example, women are not allowed to take jobs like 'Mining' that demand strength, as regulated in the Female Employees Employment Protection Regulations published in 1988 (ACFTU, 2010b). As mentioned earlier in chapter two, it is regulated that women and men have different retirement ages by the Chinese government, which means, normally, men retire when they are 60 years old; whereas their female cohorts retire at 50 or 55 (for female cadres) years old (Ministry of Labour and Social Security,

1999). Finally, women have been treated unequally in political areas which is regarded as 'one of the key markers used to identify the relative status of women' (Edwards, 2004, p. 109). There are a low number of women in key political positions (Edwards, 2004), as will be discussed in chapter six, and women politicians tend to be concentrated in the lower level of the political hierarchy (Ye, 2000).

Criticisms of patriarchy theory have been extensive. Firstly, the theory has been criticised as being circular because 'patriarchy is used to explain a situation of patriarchy - male dominance is "explained" by the fact that men dominate' (Blackburn *et al.*, 2002, p. 521). Secondly, the concept of patriarchy is 'ahistorical, and lacks sensitivity to the experiences of different groups of women' (Crompton, 1999, p. 3). As argued by Eisenstein (1983, cited in Crompton, 1999, p. 3), the category of 'women' in the early theory of patriarchy is actually a reflection of white, western, middle-class women, it, therefore, may be difficult to generalize to a wider range of women with different colours, social classes, nationalities, at various times and in differing places. Finally, Browne (2006) also contends that feminist patriarchy theories especially Walby's (1986) tend to underestimate women's agency and overestimate men's. For example, Walby claims that 'men have usually been successful in excluding women from the better work' (1986, p. 248), men are therefore assumed as omnipotent.

Gender role socialization. There is no consensus towards the gender role socialization in terms of how to group it. Some scholars argue that it should be grouped into the individualist approach (e.g., Hull and Nelson, 2000; Wharton, 2004). For example, Wharton (2004, p. 168) argues that 'the process of gender socialization is another kind of individualist explanation for sex segregation'. Others, however, tend to group it into the structuralist approach (e.g., Woodfield, 2007). For example, Woodfield (2007, p. 34) contends that socialization is a kind of 'the individual as a product of the social', which means that the role of socialization is a clear cause and demonstration of social forces on the individual (Woodfield, 2007). I agree with Woodfield's ideas in the present study.

Gender role socialization is the process of how children of different sexes are socialised into their gender roles so as to meet a society's expectations and are taught what is appropriate to be a male or female by agencies like family, peer groups, school and the media (Crespi, 2003; Weitzman, 1979). It is argued that gender socialization starts at the moment we are born (Crespi, 2003), from the question 'it is a boy or girl?' (Gleitman, Friedlund and Reisberg, 2000, p. 499).

Gender role socialization may contribute to gender differences in the labour market in several ways. Firstly, it might lead men and women to fulfil different adult roles; that is, males are expected to prioritize the work role as a primary breadwinner, and females are expected to highlight interpersonal roles as a wife/mother, even though they may be employed outside the home (Betz and O'connell, 1989; Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005; Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Secondly, as addressed by Reskin and Padavic (1994, p. 42), it also 'may contribute to a tendency for men and women to hold different values that affect their work lives, such as how important it is to have authority on the job or make lots of money'. Thirdly, it affects job opportunities as well (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Men and women are socialized to fit their proper roles, and they tend to prepare for careers that are appropriate for gender roles. In detail, females are more likely to find jobs which could facilitate the balance between family and work so that they can manage to deal with child care and house work; and males are inclined to focus on jobs which could help to get good pay to properly play the role as a breadwinner within a family (Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005; Reskin and Padavic, 1994).

When this is applied to contemporary China, it is suggested that there is a higher possibility for men to highlight the paid work role than for women (Aifeng, 2000; Zuo, 2003). As for university students, a well educated group, both males and their female counterparts regard career success as important, but female students are more likely to rate highly work-family balance and less inclined to emphasize their work goals than their male peers (Bu and Mckeen, 2001; Zhou, Dawson and Herr, 2004).

Empirical research finds the gender role socialization perspective has affected gender

differences in employment expectations. Studies carried out in Western countries find that it has impacted on gender differences in salary expectations. Studies have found that the perspective has resulted in gender differences in expected salary either at the career-entry, career-peak or at a particular time (e.g., at their 30s, see Jacobs, 2000). In detail, studies carried out in the US show that males are inclined to highlight factors like money (e.g., Blau and Ferber, 1991; Jacobs, 2000; Machung, 1989; Major and Konar, 1984). On the other hand, it is suggested that females are more likely to underline non-economic goals, such as interest of the work (Major and Konar, 1984), intellectual challenge (Blau and Ferber, 1991), self-fulfilment or independence (Machung, 1989), helping people (Jacobs, 2000), and work life balance (Jackson, Sullivan and Gardener, 1992). Those differences between males and females have led to the so-called gender gap in expected salaries.

With regard to university students in China, studies find that female university students are more likely to highlight stable jobs and less inclined to prioritize high salary jobs than their male peers. For example, Xu and Bu (2006) examined the employment conditions of 373 male and 271 female university students from eight HEIs in Nanjing, China. They observed that female university students were more likely to choose stable jobs that were usually offered by state owned enterprises, government as well as schools, and less likely to choose jobs in foreign owned enterprises than their male peers. Moreover, they also noted that male university students had a higher salary expectation than their female counterparts. Their findings have been echoed by another study. Based on a questionnaire survey data of 693 university graduating students from 6 universities and vocational colleges in Shandong, China, Wu (2007) found that male university students were more likely to choose occupations that could provide high salaries, for example, private enterprises; while their female cohorts preferred occupations that could offer stable jobs, for instance, state owned enterprises.

The gender role socialization perspective is not immune to criticisms. Firstly, its assumption that occupational choice-making is shaped by people's previous experiences, especially those happening in childhood, are questioned by a number of

scholars. For example, Reskin and Padavic (1994, p. 42) argued that '[C]hildhood gender-role socialization is actually not very important for explaining women's and men's concentration in different jobs, their different rates of promotion, and their different average earnings'. Gerson (1993) also found that childhood experiences accounted for little about people's adult lives. Secondly, another sort of challenge to the perspective comes from the argument that there is a weak link between the sex-type characteristics and the sex composition of occupations (Reskin and Roos, 1990). This means that men do not necessarily end up with male-dominated occupations and women do not always instinctively choose female-dominated occupations. Rather, both of them could cross the so-called boundary and make their inroads into non-traditional occupations, for example, men as secretaries and women as engineers. Finally, scholars also argue that sex-typing occupations should also take into account such issues like normative and cultural limits on female employment and restricting female labour supply (Cohn, 1985).

In summary, general structuralist perspectives have faced extensive criticisms, for example, taking individuals as the 'mere puppet of social forces' (Hodgson, 2007, p. 6) and therefore fail to acknowledge individuals' 'creative struggle and creative action' (Murphy, 1998, p. 188). Structuralist perspectives on gender differences in the labour market, especially in employment expectations, have paid sufficient attention to social factors that contribute to the so-called gender differences; however, they have, to some extent, overlooked individuals' active roles. Therefore, structuralist approaches to gender differences in the labour market fail to explore the active interaction between the individual and social factors; rather, they believe that individuals are passive victims of accepting social norms, rules or value system, of being framed by social structure.

3.2.3 Approaches emphasizing both choice and constraint

Existing theories regarding gender differences in the labour market are somewhat flawed in that they have either focused on choice or constraint, and very few studies have paid attention to both sides. Scholars have argued that a full account of gender

differences in the labour market cannot be achieved unless one grasps factors covering both personal choice and social constraint (Crompton and Harris, 1998 and 1999; England, 1992; McRae, 2003).

Firstly, Folbre (1994, p. 4) argues that it is fairly necessary to develop a perspective that 'emphasizes choice and constraint, co-operation and conflict, individual and group dynamics'. Using this insight, Crompton and Harris (1998 and 1999) examine the structuring of females' employment by sampling two feminizing occupations, medicine and banking based on a comparative study carried out in five countries, Britain, Norway, France, Russia and Czech Republic. By using questionnaire surveys and biographical interviews, they find that a series of factors affected females' employment, such as the welfare state, family reproductive policy, the approach to the liberal equality agenda, domestic division of labour and occupational structure. They, therefore, argue that on the one hand, women's choice is a major independent variable in explaining women's employment patterns; however, on the other hand, women's employment-related attitudes and behaviours have been constrained by occupation-specific and national contexts. Based on these, they claim that 'women - and men - can choose but are also constrained, a fact which lies at the root of sociological explanations of human behaviours' (1998, pp. 120-121).

Secondly, based on a longitudinal survey aiming to examine women's work history, their sex-role attitudes and the relationship between attitudes and work history in Britain, McRae (2003, p. 328) claims that '[a]ll women face constraints in making decisions about their lives', which echoes Crompton and Harris's findings. McRae (2003) further proposes two kinds of constraints facing women in making their choices: normative and structural. She suggests that the former is more linked to 'women's own identity' (2003, p. 329), which includes 'gender relations in the family and husband/partner's attitudes' (p. 329). The latter encompasses factors like job availability and the cost and availability of childcare. What is more, according to McRae (2003), the two constraints may intertwine at least in Britain. Although McRae's study largely focuses on exploring women's actions in the labour market, her conclusion could also be applied to men. Males do make choices, but like

females, their choices will also face a set of constraints, such as the economic structure, social norms and their wife/partner's attitudes.

Thirdly, Hull and Nelson (2000) find that both choice and constraint have affected gender differences in the career of lawyers, by using data from large scale interviews (649, with 222 women). In particular, they argue that the emerging preferences (e.g., how many hours a lawyer works, to what extent a lawyer needs to face the work-family tension) and post-entry constraints (gender inequality in legal employment) could be plausible for explaining the results (e.g., male and female lawyers in Chicago begin their careers in different practice contexts and the differences grow over time) emerging from their study.

Finally, Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdoğan's (2005) and Sato's (2008) studies are also included in this section because they underline that choices are performed within a number of constraints, although there is lack of a special attention to gender differences in career choices or aspirations in the study. Presenting survey data to explain influences on the career choice of 259 MBA students in three countries (Britain, Israel and Turkey), Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdoğan (2005) have proposed three levels of constraints. At the micro level, there are factors like individual agency and different forms of capital; factors at the meso level include the processes that 'mediate and negotiate career choices in the light of individual desires, capital and contextual circumstances' (p. 2004); while at the macro level, structural conditions inhibiting or enhancing career choices are included in their study. They conclude that personal human capital and capacity are more significant than structural conditions to impact on these MBA students' career choices.

Based on a large-scale social stratification and social mobility survey, Sato (2008) conducted a comparative study of workers' career aspirations under structural constraints in East Asia. He (2008, p. 1) contends that 'the constraints function at two levels: societal level and individual level'. According to him, the societal level constraints are factors like the economic structure; while the location of a worker

(e.g., age, gender, employment status, firm size, industry¹⁰) in the labour market acts as the individual level constraint.

In brief, approaches emphasizing both choice and constraint bridge the gap left by individualist and structuralist approaches. Individualist approaches largely emphasize individual factors in accounting for gender differences in the labour market whereas structuralist scholars mainly underline social factors in explaining gender differences in the labour market; however, neither of them has given an emphasis to both the individual and social factors in analyzing gender differences in the labour market. As discussed before, approaches highlighting both choice and constraint have attempted to combine both individual factors, for example, personal choice, and social factors, for instance, constraint, so that a better understanding of gender differences in the labour market could be achieved.

3.3 The conceptual framework: choice and constraint

In this section, I will elaborate the term ‘choice and constraint’ proposed by Crompton and Harris (1998), which will be employed as the conceptual framework of the study. As discussed earlier in the chapter, both choice and constraint are important factors that have contributed to the gender differences in the labour market.

3.3.1 Choice

David *et al.* (1997, p. 399) claim that choice usually encompasses a number of rational stages shown below:

- 1) possibilities are identified and separated out as ‘different’ and distinctive from one another;
- 2) information is acquired about each different option, so that they can be evaluated one against another and against previously held criteria; and
- 3) this rational appraisal leads to the selection of one option as the ‘choice’.

¹⁰ Industry is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary industries, see Sato (2008) for a review.

The argument could be used critically in the study as ‘choice does not necessarily imply intentionally. Choices can be conscious or unconscious, with intended or unintended consequences’ (Hays, 1994, p. 64). From this perspective, choices are not always rational. For the present study, the whole process of making a choice can be applied as follows:

- 1) final year undergraduates identify employment expectations (various expected salaries, different occupations and differing working regions) as different and distinctive,
- 2) they get information about employment expectations (salaries, occupations and working regions) from various sources, such as the internet, the labour market, the career service centres in universities and their peers; and
- 3) they choose the employment expectation which is the most appropriate for them according to their assessment, for example, a reasonable salary range, a proper occupation and a favourable working region.

Meanwhile, ‘choices take place in particular socially and economically structured contexts, which mean that all individuals are to some extent constrained from being entirely free to choose’ (David *et al.*, 1997, p. 398). This suggests that it would be meaningless to talk about choice without situating it into the particular context. In China, firstly, women have studied some traditionally male-dominated programmes such as Mining and Civil Engineering, which could facilitate them to have a wide occupational choice. Secondly, during the economic transition, China’s employment policy for university graduates has also experienced a trend away from the national graduates allocation policy (*Guojia biyesheng fenpei zhengce*) to the mutual choice system (*Shuangxiang xuanze*) (Agelasto, 1998), which provides a favourable background for university students to make job choices. This means that in China’s higher education labour market, not only do employers have rights to choose their preferred employees, but also university graduates, as employees, can make decisions about who might be their prospective employers (MOE, 2010b). Finally, the Chinese government has published a number of laws and policies and set up some national organizations that could legitimate male and female university

students' employment choices to a substantial extent.

Nowadays, it is common in China that graduating students attend a number of job interviews and finally get a proper job offer. On the other hand, for employers, there are also quite a large number of candidates for them to choose from and to decide who would be the best, or appropriate, job offer holder. For example, through a large online survey based on university graduating students in 2008, scholars found that to get a job offer, graduating students in HEIs need to apply for at least eight jobs (Mycos, 2009).

Linking choice to employment expectations of final year undergraduates in this study, it is clear that employment expectations are also part of the process of decision-making. Taking the monthly salary expectations for example, final year undergraduates could have a range of job choices with various salary levels. Facing those different choices, final year undergraduates need to assess themselves regarding how to choose a proper range of salary by relying on information derived from various sources, like direct experiences in the labour market, the career service centres in HEIs and the internet. Also, they may have to take into account personal factors, such as capacities, interests and job preferences, as well as societal factors such as parental influences and social culture in order to make a reasonable choice regarding expected salaries.

3.3.2 Constraint

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, men and women can make choices; however, their choices are constrained (Crompton and Harris, 1999). Indeed, scholars have addressed the issue substantially (e.g., Crompton and Harris, 1999; MaRae, 2003). To date, there are a number of different classifications of constraints that impose on choices, such as MaRae's (2003) normative and structural constraints, Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdoğan's (2005) micro, meso and macro-level constraints, Sato's (2008) societal and individual constraints, and David *et al.*'s (1997) moral (e.g., gendered moral rationalities) and structural (e.g., income, social networks, race and

ethnicity) constraints, and Himmelweit and Sigala's (2003) internal (e.g., personal identities) and external (e.g., external circumstances such as childcare places and timing of employment) constraints. In addition, although Crompton and Harris have not explicitly contributed to the classifications of constraints, their arguments are based on a sociological perspective in that they focus on 'how the social structure affects individuals-without in any way seeing individuals as entirely "determined" by the structure' (Crompton and Harris, 1999, p. 145). In other words, Crompton and Harris highlight the impact of social structure on the individual on one hand; however, on the other hand, they have not overlooked the role of the individual in accounting for human behaviours.

Having considered these different classifications, this study will employ the classification of societal and individual constraints, which could be regarded as a combination of Sato's classification of constraints and Crompton and Harris's arguments of how to account for human behaviours by adopting a sociological approach. That is to say, Sato has concretized his classification of societal and individual constraints by fitting the economic structure into the societal constraints, and the location of a worker (e.g., age, gender, employment status, firm size and industry) into the individual constraints. However, this study will use different concepts of societal constraints from Sato, and it will also narrow down Sato's argument about the individual constraints. This is because I think the range of his individual constraints is too wide, as it encompasses both individual and extra-individual factors. For example, age, gender, employment status could be constraints that function at the individual level, but firm size and industry could be regarded as the extra-individual constraints.

Crompton and Harris have crystallized their argument of constraints by using empirical evidence. For example, in their view; constraints could be occupational-specific and national (e.g., economic circumstances) contexts (Crompton and Harris, 1998), patriarchal practices (Crompton and Harris, 1999) and individual preference (Crompton and Harris, 1998). However, Crompton and Harris' arguments seem to largely highlight societal constraints on human behaviours, which

means that little attention has been paid to individual constraints. This might be because they are contesting Hakim's arguments of preference that have overestimated personal preference in shaping choices, since Crompton and Harris (1999, p. 144) argue that 'in particular explanatory instances, an argument from structure might be more appropriate than an argument from action'.

In this regard, the present study will underscore both societal and individual constraints without prioritizing one and overlooking the other. This approach bridges the gap of both individualist and structuralist perspectives in accounting for gender differences in the labour market, since they either highlight individual or extra-individual factors, neither of them have emphasized both.

Therefore, overall, there are two sorts of constraints: individual and societal. The former refer to constraints that function at the individual level, for example, personal job preferences, personal interests; while the latter tend to include political, economic and cultural circumstances that could affect gender differences in employment expectations. When applied to the present study, in addressing gender differences in employment expectations, based on the existing literature, individual constraints could be personal job preference. While societal constraints could cover issues like different gender roles in a family, sex discrimination in the labour market as well as parents' various expectations. However, individual constraints are still affected by societal factors when they are used to account for gender differences in the labour market, but they are not passively shaped by the societal factors, rather, they can actively exert their own impact on the gender differences in the labour market.

In terms of individual constraints - personal job preference in the present study, studies have found that males are more likely to choose jobs that could provide them with high salary, both in China (Wu, 2007) and beyond (e.g., Blau and Ferber, 1991; Jacobs, 2000; Machung, 1989; Major and Konar, 1984). On the other hand, females are more concerned with factors like work-life balance (Jackson, Sullivan and Gardener, 1992) and stable jobs (Wang, 2002; Xu and Bu, 2006.). The job preference, one of the important factors, has led to gender differences in the employment

expectations. Indeed, it is apparent that some items under the umbrella of personal job preference are closely related to gender role socialization approach in accounting for gender differences in employment expectations. Nevertheless, there are other items that belong to the personal job preference which could affect gender differences in employment expectations in a more active way.

While for social constraints, cultural norms, especially the traditional family role division, sex discrimination in the labour market and parental expectation, have been documented as constraints that function at the extra-individual level.

Firstly, in respect of cultural norms, whilst China has made great efforts to improve gender inequality (ADB, 2006); the goal of gender equality is far from being achieved. The male-breadwinner model is prevalent in China, and females are still expected to take the main responsibility of taking care of children and housework (Zuo and Bian, 2001). Moreover, quite a number of both males and females contend that even though females have jobs; they still have to play the main homemaker role (Xu, 2010).

Secondly, sex discrimination has been widely recognized as a factor that has contributed to gender differences in China's labour market (e.g., Li and Li, 2008; Woodhams, Lupton and Xian, 2009; Yang, 2008). In general, sex discrimination against women has led to women's lower salaries relative to men (Li and Li, 2008; Yang, 2008) and fewer job opportunities in the labour market (Woodhams, Lupton and Xian, 2009). In particular, highly educated female university students still have to face sex discrimination against themselves in the labour market (e.g., Wang, 2002; Wang, 2004). For example, Wang (2002) reports that in terms of job hunting, female university students have to submit more CVs while obtaining fewer chances for employment than their male peers. As a result, when university graduating students, especially female students, are aware of the persisting sex discrimination in the graduate labour market, their employment expectations could be considerably affected.

Finally, parents' expectations have also impacted on their children's decision making regarding employment (Deutsch, 2004). As argued by Chen and Lan (1998, p. 385), Chinese children are normally obedient and respectful to their elders due to the Confucian philosophy, which 'exalts the scholar and emphasizes human malleability, the value of self-improvement, and the unity of the family'. Therefore, to show their respect and obedience to parents, university students, especially female students, in China will consult, or even follow, their parents' ideas regarding employment expectations to a great extent (Chin, 1988).

In summary, on one hand, final year undergraduates do make choices regarding their employment expectations, however, on the other hand, their choices of employment expectations are constrained by a wide range of factors that function both at the individual and societal level. In other words, their choices of employment expectations are accommodated by the context where the choices are made. Therefore, final year undergraduates cannot make genuine choices regarding their employment expectations; rather, their choices are limited by both the societal and the individual constraints, which have contributed to gender differences in employment expectations. In the present study, the societal constraints include traditional family role division, sex discrimination and parents' expectations, whereas the individual constraints are represented by males' and females' job preference, which, sometimes, are affected by extra-individual factors, for example, social expectations for males and females. Notably, this study claims both choices and constraints are factors that have contributed to gender differences in employment expectations. However, it will not focus on the detailed process of choice-making for final year undergraduates regarding their employment expectations; rather, special attention will be paid to how their choices of employment expectations are constructed by the constraints that function at both the societal and the individual level.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has critically reviewed the relevant literature and theories about gender differences in the labour market by grouping them into three different approaches: individualist approaches, structuralist perspectives and approaches focusing on both choice and constraint. It finds that existing literature and theories are more likely to pay attention to gender pay gaps in the labour market, but little emphasis has been given to gender differences in occupational choices. With regard to gender differences in employment expectations, once again, gender differences in salary expectations have attracted more scholars' attention, and research regarding occupational expectations between males and females is sparse. The topic of gender differences in working region expectations has rarely been studied.

This chapter has proposed a conceptual framework: choice and constraint, which is mainly based on Crompton and Harris' (1998) idea that both choice and constraint should be taken into account when explaining gender differences in the labour market. Moreover, this study has developed their ideas by elaborating the concepts of both choice and constraint and by applying it to China's context. In the next chapter, it will be argued that the study requires a mixed design combining both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description and explanation of the research design and methodology of the study. It firstly explains the research design, and then discusses the on-site self-administration questionnaire survey and the follow-up semi-structured interview. It is followed by the justification of the sampling for the study. Having finished the design stage, it then describes the pilot and main study of the questionnaire survey and interview. It also reports how the ethical issues were considered. Next, it discusses the reliability and validity of the study and analyzes the research data, which constitute the last two sections of the chapter.

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Identifying the research design

This study uses a mixed methods design. Mixed methods have been claimed as the ‘third methodological movement’ with quantitative as the first movement and qualitative the second (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. IX). Although mixed methods have had a short history, they have expanded enormously, with a number of books being published (e.g., Bergman, 2008; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). However, there is no conclusive definition of mixed methods. Many authors argue that the term ‘mixed methods’ normally brings together quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., Bryman, 2004 and 2006; Creswell, 2004 and 2009; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003); while others contend that two different qualitative (e.g., Guba and Lincoln, 1994) or quantitative methods (Gray, 2009) also belong to a mixed methods approach. The present study supports the statement that mixed methods encompass a large range of work using more than

one method (Gilbert, 2008). Of course, all these definitions share a similar premise which is that these various methods are combined in a single study, rather than multiple or related studies (Yin, 2006).

There are quite a series of designs for mixed methods research, for example, sequential and concurrent design. The former means one method follows the other or another method; and the latter refers to when two or more methods are employed simultaneously (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, Plano Clark and Garrett, 2008; Gilbert, 2008; Gray, 2009). Within each design, there are various possibilities, for example, there are three sequential designs: explanatory, exploratory and transformative (Creswell, 2009).

The present study employs a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, owing to the following two reasons. Firstly, research questions largely determine the research design (Creswell, 2009). Here are the research questions in the present study:

- 1) Are there any gender differences in the employment expectations of male and female final year undergraduates?
- 2) If so, what factors have actually contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations?

It is apparent that the second research question is based on the first one; and that the two research questions tend to address different aspects of the research topic. The first question aims to find out whether or not there are gender differences in the employment expectations of male and female final year undergraduates, which uses quantitative methods to collect data, for example, questionnaire survey. Then, the second research question identifies what factors have contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations, providing an explanation, which needs qualitative methods or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. With this in mind, I find that a mixed methods sequential explanatory design is quite appropriate for the present study, since it is 'typically used to explain and interpret quantitative results by collecting and analyzing follow-up qualitative data (Creswell,

2009, p. 211) and it deepens quantitative results by using qualitative fieldwork (Gray, 2009). Details of how the sequential explanatory design works are shown in Figure 4.1.

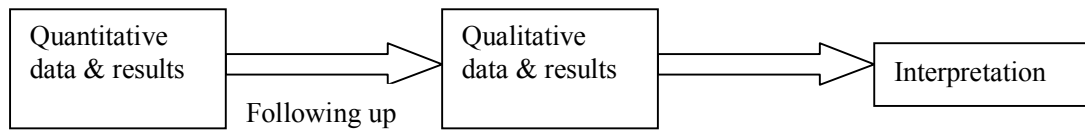


Figure 4.1 Sequential explanatory design

Source: Adapted from Creswell, Plano Clark and Garrett (2008), p. 68.

Moreover, the research design is shaped by the conceptual framework, choice and constraint. Choices are the product of social context and some certain constraints (David *et al.*, 1997), which means that an understanding of choice relies on a good understanding of constraints. As argued by a number of scholars (e.g., Himmelweit and Sigala, 2003; Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdoğan, 2005; Sato, 2008), constraints could be operating at both the individual and extra-individual level. For the individual level constraints, it might be more appropriate to use qualitative methods, as they are ‘more concerned with understanding why people behave as they do: their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, fears, and so on’ (Ewings, *et al.*, 2010, p. 1). While for extra-individual level constraints, it would be proper to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. If one intends to address both choice and constraint in a solo study, an approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods would be more appropriate.

Of course, the mixed methods sequential explanatory design has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, the straightforward nature of the design is one of the advantages (Creswell, 2009). It could be useful when unexpected results arise from a quantitative study (Morse, 1991). While for its disadvantages, it is often argued that the design requires a long time scale to collect data (Creswell, 2009; Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006).

4.2.2 Specifying the mixed methods sequential explanatory design

This study employs on-site self-completion questionnaire survey as the quantitative phase, and semi-structured interview as the qualitative (see Figure 4.2).

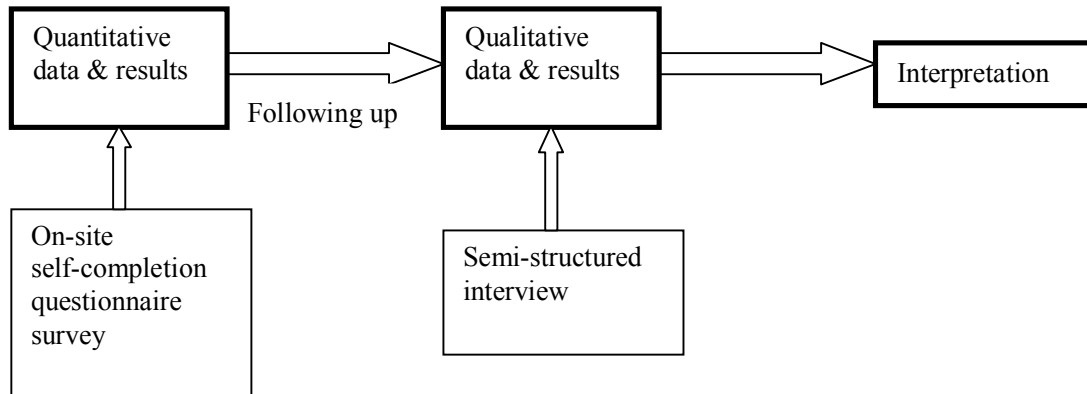


Figure 4.2 The research design of the study

A questionnaire survey is one of the most frequently used methods in social research (Gray, 2009; May, 1997). As argued by Gillham (2000, cited in Gray, 2009, p. 338), the questionnaire survey has many advantages, for example:

- It is time-and money-saving;
- The data entry is quick;
- It facilitates a large survey ;
- It is flexible, and respondents can complete the questionnaire at a time and place that suits them;
- Data analysis of closed questions is relatively simple and questions can be coded quickly;
- Respondents' anonymity can be guaranteed; and
- There is a lack of interviewer bias.

In addition, there are some drawbacks to the questionnaire survey. For example, it is difficult to control the response rate (Gilbert, 2008; Gray, 2009), and it is hard to sort out unclear answers (Gray, 2009). Furthermore, the layout of a questionnaire is also demanding (Gillham, 2000, cited in Gray, 2009, p. 339).

Having recognized the pros and cons of the questionnaire survey, the present study uses an on-site self-completion questionnaire survey, meaning that researchers or others (usually survey assistants) will be on-site and give instructions of how to

complete the questionnaire (Baker, 1999). This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is money-saving, compared to the mail questionnaire survey. Then, it might have a higher response rate than mail or web surveys (Gray, 2009). Finally, it is easier for me to manage, since I will go to the field to undertake the follow-up interviews.

The interview is the most commonly used method in qualitative research (Mason, 2002). Moreover, ‘interviews yield rich insights into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings’ (May, 2001, p. 120). As noted by May (2001), questions in semi-structured interview are normally specified, however, the interviewer is free to probe beyond the answers, and can have a dialogue with the interviewees. This study used semi-structured interviews because it makes it possible to ask questions that arise from the survey, and to probe crucial information disclosed by interviewees during the interview.

4.3 Designing the questionnaire

4.3.1 The framework of the questionnaire

As argued by De Vaus (2002), one of the most important factors affecting which questions to ask in a questionnaire is the research problem. In this study, the questionnaire survey aims to mainly address research question 1 and partly research question 2. Therefore, it is crucial to break down the research questions into two parts: employment expectations and factors that affect employment expectations. Based on the relevant literature (e.g., Feng, 2007), employment expectations include salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations; whilst a number of factors have been identified that affect employment expectations, for example, higher education (e.g., major, grade point average) and demography (e.g., gender, family background). What is more, as mentioned above, the focus of the study is gender, which means that it is important to address males’ and females’ life role orientations. Therefore, all these factors constitute the framework of the questionnaire, see Figure 4.3.

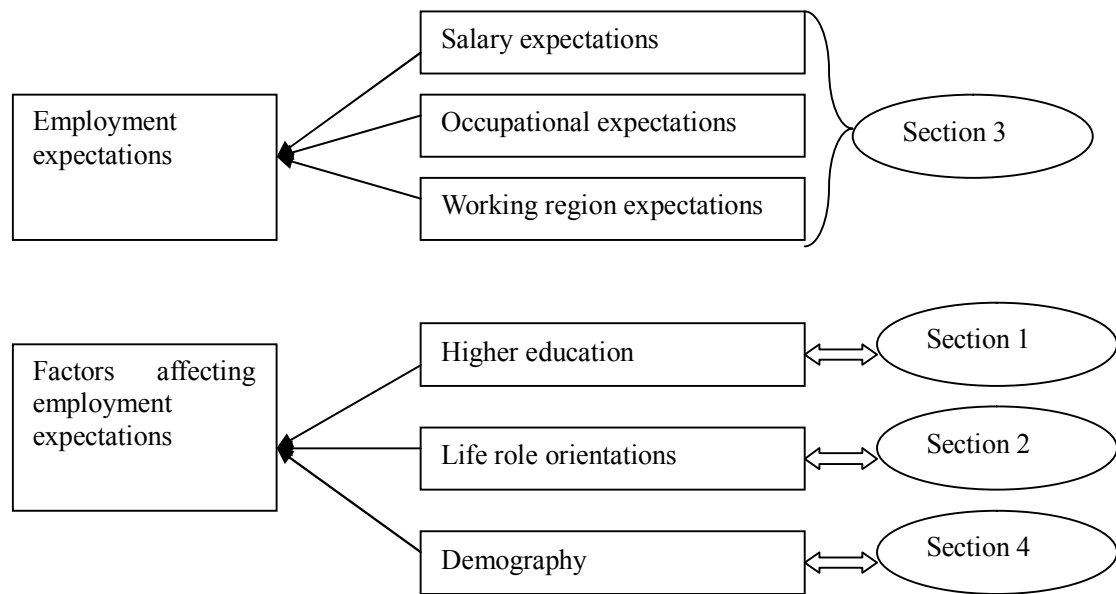


Figure 4.3 The framework of the questionnaire

As can be seen in the Figure 4.3, there are four dimensions for the questionnaire, dimension 1, 2 and 4 represent higher education variables, life role orientations and demographic variables, respectively; and dimension 3 addresses final year undergraduates' employment expectations. Details of each dimension are discussed below.

4.3.2 Items and dimensions in the questionnaire

This part focuses on why I have constructed the particular questions in each dimension to address the research questions. The proposed questions are based upon both the existing literature regarding employment expectations and my own understanding of final year undergraduates' employment expectations in China's context.

4.3.2.1 Dimension one: Higher education variables

A few items have been reported to affect students' employment expectations, which is why they have been included in the dimension. They are:

- 1) *Major*. Researchers (e.g., Jacobs, 2000; Machung, 1989) have already identified that university students' employment expectations are related to their majors.
- 2) *Academic performance*. Academic performance has been regarded as an important factor that affects university students' employment expectations (Carvajal *et al.*, 2000; Jacobs, 2000; Wolter and Zbinden, 2002). Similarly, in China, academic performance is widely used by the employers as a criterion to choose appropriate job candidates.
- 3) *Work experience*. As noted by Sallop and Kirby (2007), work experience has some effects on salary expectations. In China it is very common that graduating students are asked whether or not they have work experience during their job-hunting process, no matter part-time or full-time.
- 4) *CCP membership*. In China, CCP membership has been very important for university students to get a job, especially a job in the government.
- 5) *Student leadership*. In the labour market, final year undergraduates tend to be asked whether or not they have been a student leader during their college life. This is because in the employer's eyes, students who have been a student leader tend to be more qualified towards a job than those who have never been a student leader.
- 6) *Further education plan*. Jacobs (2000) finds that having a further education plan will positively increase university students' salary expectations.

4.3.2.2 Dimension two: Life role orientations

Section 2 is largely linked to another variable that might affect employment expectations - life role orientations, which mean career salience and family salience and refer to the relative importance an individual places on these two life roles (e.g., Angrist, 1969; Jackson, Sullivan and Gardener, 1992).

Items in this dimension focus on how final year undergraduates deal with the relationship between family and work if they are going to get married, and also explore how they expect their prospective spouses to tackle the issue of work and family. What is more, as childbearing and child care issues have been widely

acknowledged to affect women's labour force participation (Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005; Hughes and Maurer-Fazio, 2002), items about when to have a child and who will be playing a major role in the child care issues are also included.

4.3.2.3 Dimension three: Employment expectations

Section 3 is directly related to employment expectations, which have been broken down into salary expectations, working region expectations and occupational expectations.

Firstly, final year undergraduates are asked their salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations. Also, since quite a large number of students were studying teacher-training programmes, the level of education they would like to work were also included. In addition, the relationship among the three sub-employment expectations is probed. Finally, job preferences are also selected due to the following two reasons. To begin with, job preferences shape people's (Super and Sverko, 1995) and final year undergraduates' employment choices (Jacobs, 2000). Additionally, some particular questions in the job preferences list will help to triangulate respondents' answers. For instance, the issue of 'opportunity to combine family and work' is largely linked to items in the second dimension, which makes respondents' answers more reliable and valid.

4.3.2.4 Dimension four: Demography

The existing literature has documented that final year undergraduates' demography is an important factor affecting their employment expectations (e.g., Carvajal *et al.*, 2000; Jacobs, 2000; Smith and Powell, 1990). After a scrutiny of the literature, I have filtered some factors that are not strongly related to China's context, for example, age, since most of students go to HEIs at similar ages, at around 18 years old; and kept the following 5 demographical factors: gender, place of origin, parental educational levels, parental occupations and family annual income. I will discuss the latter four in detail.

Place of origin. It is a factor affecting final year undergraduates' employment expectations, as noted by Carvajal *et al.* (2000). In China's context, the term 'place of origin' is grouped into four subgroups: big cities, medium and small cities, counties and town as well as countryside, which also helps to understand the differences of employment expectations between respondents from urban China (the first three) and those from rural China (the last one).

Parental education levels. Parents' education levels have been addressed as a factor affecting their children's employment expectations, especially salary expectations (e.g., Brunello, Lucifora and Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Smith and Powell, 1990). For example, Brunello, Lucifora and Winter-Ebmer (2001) found that mother's college degree would lead to an increase in the expected salary in some European countries (e.g., Germany, Italy).

Parental occupations. Studies find that there is a relationship between mother's occupations and their daughter's employment choice in Western countries, that is, mother's role in work and family tends to be a model that their daughters are inclined to copy (e.g., Davey and Stoppard, 1993, cited in Altman and Grossman, 1977, p. 365; Falkowski and Falk, 1983). While in China, there have been a number of studies addressing the impact of fathers' occupations on their children's employment. For example, Wen (2006) found that in 2003, university graduates whose father had a managerial job got 400 RMB more than those whose father was a farmer, each month.

Family income. Scholars have reported that family annual income is also a vital factor of affecting final year undergraduates' employment expectations (Psacharopoulos, 1977).

4.4 Formulating the interview schedule

The interview schedule is based on part of the results emerging from the questionnaire survey, which consists of four dimensions: background, employment

expectations, gender issues and a general question. In total, it has 12 questions.

In the background section, four questions are asked, aiming to obtain information about interviewees' backgrounds that have not been probed in the questionnaire survey. The four questions focus on:

- 1) motivation of having a higher education,
- 2) family background and parents' expectations for their children's employment expectations (e.g., how much do parents expect their children to earn monthly or annually? Which area? What occupation?),
- 3) approaches to job seeking (e.g., online, attending job fairs) and
- 4) time and money spent in job seeking.

Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, questions in section two firstly address how the final year undergraduates finalise their employment expectations, in other words, what factors have actually affected their employment expectations. Secondly, the relationship among the three sub employment expectations (salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations) is explored. Thirdly, the relationship between the interviewees' programmes and their occupational expectations is probed. Finally, the impact of the CCP membership on the interviewees' employment situations is explored.

Section three is mainly focused on gender issues. Three issues are probed:

- 1) the impact of gender on job seeking,
- 2) how to deal with the relationship between family and work and
- 3) how to interpret the findings emerging from the questionnaire data which is that male final year undergraduates generally had higher salary expectations than their female counterparts.

The general question in section four is quite open, which helps to elicit the interviewees' ideas about final year undergraduates' employment as a whole in the

case university and in China.

4.5 Sampling the research respondents

4.5.1 The research setting

The research was undertaken in the case university - Huazhong University (*pseudonym*) for three reasons. First, I could get access to research respondents in the university. One of my undergraduate classmates has been working there for four years, and she has been in charge of the Social Survey Centre¹¹ for two years and as such could offer assistance for the questionnaire distribution, as will be discussed later in the chapter. Secondly, my topic was focused on gender, which required a research setting with quite a large number of females. In the Huazhong University, females took up approximately 60% of the total students' enrolment in 2008¹². Thirdly, students from 28 provinces and municipalities, out of 31 in China, have come to the university for their studies, which meant that the potential research respondents were heterogeneous, and this helped to address final year undergraduates' working region expectations.

The Huazhong University is located in central China where it is less developed, compared with coastal areas of China. The Huazhong University was established in the 1970s, directly under the educational administration of C province. In 2008, there were more than 1,000 academic staff, of whom there were over 100 professors and 200 associate professors (The Website of Huazhong University, 2008). There were over 10,000 students in the university from 28 provinces or municipalities in China (The Website of Huazhong University, 2008). The university offered 42 four-year and 18 three-year undergraduate programmes which were provided within 16 different schools/colleges or departments. Additionally, there were 26 master's programmes. However, there was no doctoral programme offered in the university.

¹¹ The Social Survey Centre, established at October, 1997, has been under the supervision of the Office of Youth League at the university. It aims at undertaking social investigations related to a wide range of issues. Up to 2008, there were 28 members, coming from different schools within the university (The website of Huazhong university, 2008).

¹² After gaining the oral consent from a staff working in the Department of Student Affairs in the Huazhong University, I could disclose the proportion of female students in the university.

Originally, the Huazhong University was a teaching-oriented university, which meant that all the programmes offered in the university aimed to train teachers for secondary school teachers in China. However, since the 1990s, the university has undergone a transition from a teacher-oriented university to a relatively more comprehensive one in terms of programmes offered in the university. As a result, more and more non teacher-training programmes have been established and there are more non teacher-training programmes than teacher-training programmes. For example, in 2008, there were 24 non teacher-training and 18 teacher-training programmes.

In terms of employment, graduates from the university have worked in many different areas in China, spreading across various occupations, although a large proportion of them have been secondary school teachers in China. In addition, most graduates in the case university have worked in urban China.

4.5.2 Sampling for the questionnaire survey

Researchers argue that in a mixed methods explanatory design, the same or a subset of the participants should be included in both quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell, Plano Clark and Garrett, 2007), since the intention of the design is to use qualitative data to provide more details about the results emerging from the quantitative data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This study uses a subset of participants in the questionnaire survey for the interview in the main study stage.

Sampling for the pilot

The sampling for the pilot study was based on the idea of opportunity sampling which is a kind of sample that seeks to get people who are available for the study (Baker, 1999; De Vaus, 2002; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). It is argued that opportunity sampling can be useful for pilot testing questionnaires (De Vaus, 2002).

With respect to the pilot sample, De Vaus (2002, p. 117) argues that ‘the closer the match between the pilot sample and the final sample, the better’. Williams (2003, p. 119) advises that the pilot sample should be ‘members of the target population’. With their guidance, I therefore tried my best to choose final year undergraduates who would be respondents in the final questionnaire survey as my pilot sample. Guided by their advice and according to the availability of final year undergraduates, I finally had 29 questionnaires, with 25 valid questionnaires, in which 12 males and 13 females participated.

Sampling for the main study

The sampling for the main study employed purposive sampling which is ‘a form of non-probability sampling where cases are judged as typical of some category of cases of interest to the researcher’ (De Vaus, 2002, p. 90). Although it cannot guarantee the representativeness, it could still provide useful information (De Vaus, 2002).

The process of the sampling for the questionnaire survey in the main study was:

Step 1: Selecting 14 programmes (out of 32) falling into 7 broad disciplines in the case university. The rationale is to meet the following standard: balancing programmes where there were more females and those with more males, balancing teacher-training programmes and non teacher-training programmes. Finally, there were seven teacher-training programmes, and seven non teacher-training programmes. There were more females than their male counterparts in the following 10 programmes: Applied Chemistry, Chinese, Economics, Education, English, Fine Art, History, Journalism, Broadcast and TV, Law, Maths and Applied Maths; while in programmes like Biological Technology, Information Engineering and Physics, the number of males outweighed that of their female peers. The number of males was identical with that of their female peers in the Communication Engineering programme.

I employed programmes as the selecting frame owing to two reasons: firstly, as shown earlier in chapter three, programmes have been an important factor affecting employment expectations (e.g., Jacobs, 2000). Then, students' dormitories in the case university were assigned based on programmes, which meant that students with the same programme and same sex stayed together. Therefore, it facilitated the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

Step 2: To make the sample more comparable, the number of males and that of their female peers needed to be identical. Therefore, 752 research respondents were included, with 376 males and 376 females.

Step 3: In practice, not all the 752 respondents were accessible. After a number of conversations with some final year undergraduates, I then decided to sample 70% of the potential respondents. Details will be discussed later in the operational section of the questionnaire survey in the main study.

Step 4: As shown in Table 4.1, there were fractional numbers in step 3, so I had to round either up or down to get a proper size, as shown in step 4 in the table. Finally, I got a sample of 534.

4.5.3 Sampling for the semi-structured interview

Sampling for the pilot

The sampling for the pilot interview was mainly a kind of opportunity sampling, since I sampled them only based on their availability and interests. I sampled two males for the pilot study: one from the Physics programme and the other from the Maths and Applied Maths programme.

Sampling for the main study

For the main study, I employed purposive sampling. As for the purposive sampling,

Table 4.1 Sampling for the questionnaire survey

Discipline	Programme	Female	Male	Total	Total Population (TP)	70% of TP	Final Sample
Literature	Chinese	164	39	203	78	54.6	56
	English	152	21	173	42	29.4	30
	Journalism, Broadcast and TV	44	10	54	20	14	14
	Fine Art	50	33	83	66	46.2	46
Law	Law	53	36	89	72	50.4	50
Economics	Economics	43	26	69	52	36.4	36
History	History	53	33	86	66	46.2	46
Education	Education	30	5	35	10	7	8
Science	Maths and Applied Maths	127	56	183	112	78.4	78
	Physics	32	64	96	62	44.8	46
	Applied Chemistry	29	21	50	42	29.4	30
	Biological Technology	19	27	46	38	26.6	28
Engineering	Communication Engineering	25	25	50	50	35	36
	Information Engineering	21	29	50	42	29.4	30
Total	14 programmes	842	425	1267	752		534
Procedure	Step1	Step 2				Step 3	Step 4

originally, I intended to sample one male and one female from each programme, which could make it more comparable. However, during the interviews, I found it really difficult to get one male and one female from each programme for a number of reasons, for example, the prospective interviewees' availability or their willingness. Hence, although, I finally got 26 interviewees from 13 programmes with 2 interviewees for each programme, there were two males or females in some programmes, but I was not able to manage to sample two interviewees from the Fine Art programme (see Table 4.2). Indeed, the sample size of the interview was small, but it could facilitate to have illustrative findings.

Table 4.2 Interviewees' programmes

Programme	Female	Male
Chinese Literature	0	2
English	1	1
Journalism, Broadcast and TV	2	0
Fine Art	0	0
Law	2	0
Economics	1	1
History	1	1
Education	1	1
Maths and Applied Maths	1	1
Physics	1	1
Applied Chemistry	0	2
Biological Technology	1	1
Communication Engineering	0	2
Information Engineering	2	0
Total	13	13

4.6 The pilot and main study

4.6.1 Getting access to the research respondents

For the questionnaire survey, I got the questionnaires distributed with the help of university students working in the Social Survey Centre at the Huazhong University both for the pilot and the main study. After some conversations with two staff working in the Students Career Service Centre in the university, I realized that students mainly stayed in their dormitories that could be a research location for the

survey. I was told that, as a stranger, I was not allowed to enter students' dormitories. Therefore, I turned to the Social Survey Centre in the university. Then, I got some students working in the centre who could help me to distribute questionnaires after a series of talks with the director of the Social Survey Centre. The students were recruited voluntarily with the help of the director of the centre. They were in the second or third year of their studies, and were also very experienced in conducting social surveys since they had conducted quite a number of social surveys before. I had 7 students for the pilot and 14 for the main study.

The detailed process was as follows: firstly, I gave them instructions about the survey, for example, how to present questionnaires to potential respondents and when to collect those questionnaires. Then, the students went to final year undergraduates' dormitories and asked if those final year undergraduates would like to participate in the questionnaire survey. If somebody said yes, then she/he would be given a questionnaire. The students then went to the dormitories to collect the questionnaires two days (for the pilot) or one week (for the main study) later. Finally, they handed the questionnaires to me. One thing needing to be borne in mind was that each student was responsible for distributing the questionnaires to research respondents in his/her own school. For example, if one was from the School of Education, she/he would be responsible for questionnaire distribution for the school, which made it easier for him/her to get access to the respondents because they might know each other as part of their university life.

With regard to the interview, I contacted the interviewees myself, both for the pilot and main study. As at the end of each questionnaire, there was one question asking if final year undergraduates would like to attend an interview that was around half an hour. If yes, they would provide their names, mobile numbers and emails, through which I could contact them. The interviews were conducted as follows: firstly, I contacted them by text messages, introducing myself and the research project, also asking if they would like to attend an interview. If yes, I called them and agreed the exact time and location of an interview. I then sent them a text message one day before the interview to double-check their availability, and confirmed with them one

hour before the interview by sending a text message. All the interviews were conducted in the same way.

4.6.2 The questionnaire survey

It is essential to evaluate rigorously a questionnaire before using it in the formal questionnaire survey (De Vaus, 2002). For other reasons, piloting a questionnaire would avoid confusing, or unreliable variables (Gray, 2009), or reduce the possibility that a research project is spoiled by a poor questionnaire design (Williams, 2003). Having recognised the significance of conducting a pilot study and identified the research respondents (as discussed earlier in the sampling section), I then conducted the pilot.

4.6.2.1 The pilot

Undertaking the pilot

The pilot of the questionnaire survey was scheduled for December 2008. However, before I went back to China to undertake the pilot, I checked the possibility of conducting a pilot in the case university in relation to a number of issues, for example, whether prospective respondents were on the university campus¹³. After getting a positive answer from my undergraduate classmate, I then went back to China in December 2008.

The pilot was conducted with the help of students working in the Social Survey Centre in the case university, as discussed earlier in the section. Initially, I managed to get 30 questionnaires distributed, and received 29 replies. After a check of the quality and logical consistency of the data the research respondents provided, I deleted 4 questionnaires. Therefore, finally, I got 25 valid questionnaires (see Table 4.3). As a result, the response rate tended to be quite high, 83%. This might be explained by the fact that those students were very responsible, and very capable of

¹³ Normally, December is a good time for university students to find jobs, so they usually go out of university campus to attend job fairs far away.

doing surveys.

With regard to the details of the research respondents for the questionnaire survey, there were 12 males and 13 females, coming from 7 different programmes. In some programmes, there were more males than their female counterparts, for instance, Physics; while in other programmes, the number of females outweighed their male peers, such as English, History and Social Work.

Table 4.3 Statistics of the respondents for the pilot of the questionnaire survey

Programme	Male	Female	Total
Maths and Applied Maths	4	3	7
History	2	3	5
Social Work	2	2	4
Physics	3		3
Information and Computing Science		2	2
English	1	2	3
Fine Art		1	1
Total	12	13	25

Moreover, as argued by Williams (2003, p. 120), ‘one of the best ways to increase the validity of the questions is to get the population to whom they will be administered to help design them’. He also suggests a good approach to do this is to have in-depth interviews with prospective respondents. As for what to test, Converse and Presser (1986, p. 72) have proposed a variety of ideas to check with interviewees:

- Any question that make interviewees uncomfortable;
- Any question that is difficult to understand;
- Any question that is difficult to read and interviewees do not like; and
- Any question that interviewees want to say more about.

With regard to the pilot, I successfully invited a male final year undergraduate studying a History programme to attend a discussion about the questionnaire design. I sat with the student in the ground floor of a restaurant at the case university. Firstly, I asked him to complete a questionnaire and I took notes on how much time he spent. It took him approximately 15 minutes to finish the questionnaire. Then I asked him to comment on the questionnaire, I wrote down his comments on a separate sheet. During our discussion, I also proposed a number of questions with the help of

Converse and Presser's arguments, for example, is it understandable? Is there anything unclear? Is the questionnaire too long? After a 50-minute discussion, I got valuable comments from the student which could be summarized briefly. Firstly, he said the questionnaire was a little bit long - 7 pages in Chinese, he argued that 5 to 6 pages would be better. Then, he said the instructions were not very clear. Finally, he also suggested that I should find some partnership with the Student Career Service Centre in the university to distribute questionnaires in the main study, since samples in the main study would be much larger than that in the pilot.

Changes after the pilot

After finishing the data analysis for the pilot study, I made revisions to the questionnaire. Firstly, a number of items were deleted due to their lack of relationship with the research questions. For example, the 'age', 'ethnicity', final year undergraduates' National College Entrance Examination Score (*gaokao fenshu*). Also, due to a further clarification of the research questions in the study, one research question 'what is the relationship between final year undergraduates' employment expectations and their actual job outcomes? Is there any gender difference?' has been taken out because very few final year undergraduates had got their jobs when I conducted the pilot and it would not have changed much during the main study period according to employment conditions in the Chinese graduate labour market in recent years. Alongside the revision of questions in the questionnaire, the instructions and layout of the questionnaire were also changed substantially. What is more, the questionnaire was shortened from 7 to 5 pages in Chinese.

4.6.2.2 The main study

From mid-April to the end of May, 2009, I carried out the main study of the questionnaire survey after revising the questionnaire. The main study generally consisted of two steps: preparation and operation.

The preparation step spanned from mid-April to early May, 2009. Firstly, I worked

out how many students I needed to sample by talking to some staff working in the Students Career Services Centre and final year undergraduates in the case university. After talking to two staff, I found that April to June was a good time for university students to look for jobs, since there were many job fairs being held in various universities, which meant that a number of final year undergraduates would go out of the university to attend job fairs. From the staff I also found that final year undergraduates have finished their courses in the final year in early April, and the remaining time - from mid-April to the end of June - was to prepare their undergraduate thesis, which indicated that final year undergraduates did not need to go to classes any more, rather, they mainly stayed in students' dormitories. Then, I also managed to talk with final year undergraduates themselves, asking their job-seeking situation and how many classmates were still on the university campus. One student from the Biological Technology programme said 'roughly 70 per cent of my classmates are on the campus'. Another student from the Chinese programme said 'around 65 per cent students in my class are in the university'. Therefore, in order to get as large sample as possible, I decided to sample 70 per cent of the target population.

After this, I worked out how many students I need to sample (see Table 4.1, p. 71), and then printed out the questionnaire. Then, I contacted the Social Survey Centre in the university by asking if they could help me to distribute questionnaires and when they would be available. I had a formal conversation with the director and vice director of the Social Survey Centre after getting a positive answer from the Social Survey Centre¹⁴, discussing the details of the questionnaire survey. For example, when would it be possible to distribute and collect the questionnaires? I also provided instructions on the questionnaire survey by asking them especially to pay attention to balance the number of male respondents and that of their female counterparts. After checking the availability of the students working in the Social Survey Centre and those final year undergraduates (indirectly checking), I finalised the survey date - the middle of May.

¹⁴ The director and vice director of the Social Survey Centre were both third year undergraduates in the university, one student were from the Social Work programme, and the other students came from the Maths and Applied Maths programme. They both have engaged a number of social surveys in and out of the university.

The operation step commenced on 13th May, 2009 when 14 students working in the Social Survey Centre from different schools within the university had a meeting about the questionnaire survey, which was co-chaired by the director of the Social Survey Centre and me. The detailed process was discussed earlier in the section. Finally, I got the questionnaires returned approximately one week later.

Originally, 534 questionnaires were distributed in the hope of balancing the number of males and females; however, I finally got 466 questionnaires, with a response rate of 85%. After deleting some questionnaires because of the inconsistencies of the questionnaires or questionnaires that were completed by final year undergraduates who were not supposed to be research respondents (e.g., a totally different programme which I have not covered in the research design), finally, there were 427 valid questionnaires in total, including 190 males and 237 females (see Table 4.4), and with a valid response rate of 80%.

4.6.3 The interview

4.6.3.1 The pilot

After collecting the questionnaires at the end of May, 2009, I began to contact final year undergraduates who would like to attend the interview, since they specified in the questionnaires whether or not they were willing to attend an interview. Firstly, 61 final year undergraduates intended to attend the interviews, including 25 males and 36 females. However, after checking their availability, quite a lot of them responded negatively, which reduced the number of prospective interviewees.

I did the first two interviews on 27th and 28th May, which were regarded as the pilot of the interview. One interviewee was studying the Physics programme, and the other one studying the Maths and Applied Maths programme. Both of the interviewees were male. Before the interview, I introduced myself to them. After that, I asked them to read through the interview schedule, it was followed by a check of their readiness. Then, I asked if I could record the interview. With their agreement, I then

Table 4.4 Statistics of the respondents for questionnaire survey

Discipline	Programme	Distributed Number	Returned Number	Invalid	Valid in Total	Female	Male
Literature	Chinese	56	40	7	33	24	9
	English	30	22	3	19	15	4
	Journalism, Broadcast and TV	14	10	1	9	7	2
	Fine Art	46	45	13	32	19	13
Law	Law	50	50	1	49	24	25
Economics	Economics	36	34	2	32	17	15
History	History	46	42	5	37	23	14
Education	Education	8	8	0	8	4	4
Science	Maths and Applied Maths	78	58	1	57	31	26
	Physics	46	43	2	41	20	21
	Applied Chemistry	30	21	1	20	7	13
	Biological Technology	28	27	2	25	14	11
Engineering	Communication Engineering	36	36	1	35	17	18
	Information Engineering	30	30	0	30	15	15
Total		534	466	39	427	237	190

recorded the interview, and one interview lasted 35 minutes and the other 25 minutes. Then, I transcribed the interview recordings and analyzed the interviews in Chinese by employing thematic analysis (details will be presented later in the chapter) in the following three days. Through the pilot, I found a few issues needed to be changed or improved. Firstly, getting access to interviewees was not as easy as I expected. Secondly, facing some shy respondents, I found some interview questions were difficult to explore. Finally, interview skills and techniques were what I needed to improve.

4.6.3.2 The main study

The main study of the interview started from 1st June 2009, and finished on 20th June 2009. I got 26 interviewees by contacting the interviewees myself.

As argued by Gray (2009, p. 379):

The first task of the interviewer is to explain the purpose of the interview: who the information is for, how the information is going to be handled (including issues of confidentiality), why the information is being collected and how it will be used.

Before each interview, I made a brief introduction to the interviewee. In addition, I asked them to read the consent form carefully and sign it if they agreed, in which the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewee was given special attention. Finally, I asked if I could record the interview. If she/he agreed, then the interview would be recorded. In all, 24, out of 26 interviewees agreed to have the interviews recorded.

After the preliminaries at the beginning of the interview, the interview began by following the interview schedule. During the interview, I also checked whether or not I had asked all the questions I intended to ask. At the end of each interview, I asked if the interviewees had any questions to ask or any comments to make, and I paid them a small amount of money to show my thanks.

The majority of interviews (18 out of 26) were conducted in a quiet place in a restaurant at the Huazhong University. Additionally, a small number of interviews (8

of 26) were performed in the meeting room of the Student Affairs Office in the University.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The ethics of research have become increasingly important in the past few decades (Gray, 2009), which makes it essential to conduct social research ethically. Among the ethics principles in social research, voluntary participation (De Vaus, 2002), informed consent (Baker, 1999; De Vaus, 2002; Gray, 2009; Williams, 2003), anonymity and confidentiality (Baker, 1999; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; De Vaus, 2002) are the mostly widely recommended rules. Under the guidance of those rules, I conducted my study.

4.7.1 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation means that research respondents should not be required to participate in a social research survey (De Vaus, 2002). In terms of the questionnaire survey, first, the students in the Social Survey Centre were voluntarily to play a role in distributing the questionnaire survey. Then, as mentioned above, the research respondents voluntarily participated in the survey, since they were asked by the students if they would like to participate in a survey. If they agreed, the survey could start. Moreover, I highlighted that the survey should respect the research respondents' willingness to participate in the survey.

With respect to the interview, all the interviewees were recruited by a question at the end of the questionnaire that said 'would you like to participate in an interview around half an hour?'

4.7.2 Informed consent

Informed consent means the research respondents know a range of matters regarding the survey (Baker, 1999; Crow *et al.*, 2006; De Vaus, 2002; Williams, 2003), such as,

what the study is (Baker, 1999), the purpose of the study (De Vaus, 2002) and the identity of the researcher and the sponsor (De Vaus, 2002).

As for questionnaire surveys, Gray (2009) has proposed a number of items (e.g., the aims of the research, who is being asked to participate, etc.) which would be appropriate in the introduction to make the respondents informed. While in the present study, I included the following issues in the introduction section of the questionnaire: the identity of the researcher and the sponsor, the aims of the research, what kind of information is being sought, participation in the study is voluntary, who will have access to the data once it is collected, how anonymity of respondents will be ensured, and also an offer to answer any questions regarding the survey, as suggested by De Vaus (2002).

As far as the interviews were concerned, the interviews employed De Vaus' (2002) suggestion that a common way of demonstrating informed consent is to ask participants to sign a written informed consent form. Therefore, a consent form for the interview was presented to each interviewee. Firstly, I asked them to read it carefully and ask them if they would like to sign it. All the interviewees have signed it and kept one copy. Details of the consent form for the interview are presented in appendix.

4.7.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity means 'information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 64); while confidentiality refers to the researcher being able to identify research respondents by the information given, but the researcher cannot make this known to others (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

In the questionnaire survey, I emphasized that '[Y]our answers will be completely confidential. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. The researcher is the only person who could get access to the data'. While for the interviews,

confidentiality and anonymity have been given special emphasis not only in the consent form for the interview, but in the presentation of the data, which meant that all the interviewees were given pseudonyms. Thus, it would be impossible to identify the respondents.

4.8 Reliability and validity

Research is worthless and loses its utility without rigor, therefore, reliability and validity are emphasized (Morse, *et al.*, 2002). It is argued that the terms reliability and validity can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research, but ‘how reliability and validity are addressed in these two approaches varies’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 133).

Validity refers to whether or not research really measures what it purports to measure and how truthful the research results are (Joppe, 2000). In quantitative research, validity might be improved through various means, for example, careful sampling, and appropriate instrumentation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). While in qualitative research, it might be addressed by issues like depth, richness and scope of the data, triangulation and reflexivity (Winter, 2000).

The meanings of reliability in quantitative research are quite different from those in qualitative research (Becker, Bryman and Sempik, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). As argued by these researchers, reliability in quantitative research is more concerned with ‘dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 146). However, in a qualitative approach, reliability includes ‘fidelity to real life, context and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honest, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 149).

In mixed methods research, the validity issue is still in its infancy (Onwregbuzie and

Johnson, 2006). Scholars have developed their own terms to ensure the quality of mixed methods research. For example, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, 2008) use the term ‘quality of inference’ (an attribute of the process of meaning making and/or its outcomes)¹⁵, and they have further proposed two broad criteria for evaluating the quality of inference: design quality and interpretative rigor. The former refers to ‘the degree to which the investigators have utilized the most appropriate procedures for answering the research question(s), and implemented them effectively’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008, p. 113), and there are four basic standards for quality of research design and its implementation: design suitability, design adequacy/fidelity, within design consistency and analytic adequacy. The latter is ‘the degree to which credible interpretations have been made on the basis of obtained results’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008, p. 114), which consists of five criteria or standards: interpretive consistency, theoretical consistency, interpretive agreement, interpretive distinctiveness and integrative efficacy.

Based on Tashakkori and Teddlie’s (2003) ideas, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) have proposed another term ‘legitimation’ to judge the quality of mixed methods research. They (2006, p. 56) argue that legitimation in mixed methods research ‘should be seen as a continuous process rather than as a fixed attribute of a specific research study’, since mixed methods tend to be iterative and interactive (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2004). They (2006) also develop 9 types of legitimation for mixed methods research: sample integration, inside-outside, weakness minimization, sequential, conversion, paradigmatic mixing, commensurability, multiple validities and political legitimation. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006, p. 60) further argue that the term ‘legitimation’ uses a ‘bilingual nomenclature’; therefore, it could be used by both quantitative and qualitative researchers.

Addressing the validity issue in mixed methods research and based on others’ writings mainly Tashakkori and Teddlie’s and their own ideas (Creswell, 2004),

¹⁵ Inference refers to the process of interpreting the findings and the outcome of this interpretation, see Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) for a view. Inference quality is used as an umbrella term for evaluating the quality of conclusions that are made on the basis of the findings and inference transferability to indicate the degree to which these conclusions may be applied to other specific settings, people, time periods, contexts, and so on (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008, p. 103).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 146) recommend:

- Report and discuss validity within the context of both quantitative and qualitative research in a mixed methods study;
- Also, use the term validity and inference quality to refer to validity procedures in mixed methods research;
- Define validity, within a mixed methods context;
- Validity need to be discussed from the standpoint of the overall mixed methods design chosen for a study; and
- Validity is also enhanced when the research discusses, in a mixed methods study, potential threats to validity that arise during data collection and analysis.

They also identify potential threats to the validity of sequential designs in mixed methods research that has been employed in the present study, see Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Potential threats to the validity of sequential designs in mixed methods research

Sequential designs (Explanatory, exploratory, embedded)	Minimizing the threat
<p>Data collection issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting the same or different individuals for the qualitative and quantitative data collection • Using the same size for the qualitative and quantitative data collection • Not choosing participants for the follow-up who help explain significant results • Not designing an instrument with sound psychometric (i.e. validity and reliability) properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the same individuals for an explanatory design and different individuals for explorative design • Use large sample for quantitative and small sample for qualitative • Choose the same individuals for the qualitative follow-up and the quantitative first phase • Use rigorous procedures for developing and validating the new instrument
<p>Data analysis issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing weak quantitative result to follow up on qualitatively • Choose weak qualitative findings to follow up on quantitatively • Not addressing validity issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose significant results or strong predictors to follow up on • Use major themes as the basis for the quantitative follow-up • Address both quantitative and qualitative validity

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), p. 148.

While in the present study, I employed Creswell and Plano Clark's arguments to address validity issues due to the following reasons. To begin with, it is manageable, since they have proposed some guideline to minimize the threats to the validity

issues in mixed methods research. Then, they have put the validity issues into a context where a mixed methods study is embedded.

To ensure the validity issues in the present study, I have closely followed their guidance. As in the data collection stage, firstly, the instruments - questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview have been piloted and further revised. Also, one final year undergraduates has been invited to help to improve the validity of the questions in the questionnaire. These actions could increase the appropriateness and veracity of the research instruments. Secondly, I have chosen 534 final year undergraduates for the sample of the quantitative phase, while for the qualitative phase; I chose a subset of 534 final year undergraduates, which helped to explain the results emerging from the quantitative data.

While in the data analysis stage, first, I examine some significant results based on the questionnaire survey to explore, for example, why male final year undergraduates tended to have higher salary expectations than their female counterparts? Why male final year undergraduates had quite different life role orientations from their female peers? These questions have been probed in the interviews in great detail. Second, triangulation is typically perceived as a strategy for improving the validity of research and evaluation findings (Mathison, 1988), and it has been used in the data analysis in the present study as well. In particular, some results of the questionnaire survey have been tested by the qualitative data. For instance, the questionnaire data suggested that male final year undergraduates tended to have higher salary expectations than their female cohorts. So, during the interviews, respondents were asked whether or not they accepted the argument, and they could comment on the argument. Therefore, data emerging from different sources could further justify the particular argument.

With regard to the reliability issue in this study, it has been addressed through the following strategies. Firstly, an audit trail, a term suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981) has been employed as a means to ensure reliability (Merriam, 1995). As argued by Merriam (1988, p. 172), 'in order to for an audit take place, the

investigator must describe how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry'. While in the present study, as aforementioned, I have described how I collected the research data for the study and later in this chapter, I will present how I analyzed the research data. Secondly, the stability of a measure is also involved when considering reliability (Bryman, 2008a). To ensure reliability, we must make sure that there is little variation of a measure over time (Bryman, 2008a). When it applies to the study, the same questionnaire was used to explore final year undergraduates' employment expectations in the Huazhong University. While for the interviews, I managed to ask the interviewees the same questions to a great extent.

4.9 Data analysis

It is argued that in a mixed methods study, 'methods should be mixed in a way that has complementary strengths and no overlapping weaknesses' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 352). Therefore, mixed methods data analysis is defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, p. 352-353) as:

The use of quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques, either concurrently or sequentially, at some stage beginning with the data collection process, from which interpretations are made in either a parallel, an integrated, or an iterative manner.

They have also developed a seven-stage mixed methods data analysis process: data reduction, data display, data transformation, data correlation, data consolidation, data comparison and data integration, see Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Stages of mixed methods data analysis process

Stage	Definition
Data reduction	Reducing quantitative data (e.g., descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis) and qualitative data (e.g., exploratory thematic analysis, memoing)
Data display	Reducing quantitative data (e.g., tables, graphs) and qualitative data (e.g., matrices, charts, graphs, networks, lists, rubrics, Venn diagrams)
Data transformation	Qualitizing and/or quantitizing data (e.g., possible use of effect size, exploratory factor analysis)
Data correlation	Correlating quantitative data with qualitized data
Data consolidation	Combining both data types to create new or consolidated variables or data sets
Data comparison	Comparing data from different data sources
Data integration	Integrating all data into a coherent whole or two separate sets (e.g., quantitative and qualitative) of coherent wholes

Source: Adapted from Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), p. 375.

However, due to the purpose of mixed methods in a study, researchers could bypass some stages (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). For example, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue that if the purpose of mixed methods research is for expansion, then the researcher could ignore data correlation, data consolidation and data comparison stages, and go to data integration directly. In this sense, it is quite important to decide the purpose of mixed methods research before embarking on data analysis.

In terms of the purpose of mixed methods research, Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) have proposed five intentions for combining quantitative and qualitative research: triangulation, complementary, development, initiation and expansion. Based on this, Bryman (2008b) has also developed a more detailed scheme of the purposes of mixed methods research. One of them is explanation, which means ‘one is used to help explain findings generated by the other’ (Bryman, 2008b, p. 91). In the present study, I employ a mixed methods approach mainly because of the expectation that the qualitative interview could help to explain the results emerging from the quantitative questionnaire data. Therefore, the present study has selectively followed the seven-stage mixed methods data analysis process, which is data reduction, data display and data integration.

Data reduction

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 11), data reduction refers to ‘sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that “final” conclusions can be drawn and verified’. In this stage, I firstly categorized and coded quantitative data. With respect to categorizing data, I employed De Vaus’s (2002) ideas of how to categorize data. According to him, data can be classified into three levels. Interval level data mean that data can be expressed in numerically meaningful terms, and the amount of differences between data can be specified. Examples can be people’s ages, earnings. Ordinal level data refer to data can be ranked from low to high, but the differences between data cannot be specified, for example, within age categories, people can be ranked as ‘child’, ‘adolescent’, ‘young adult’, ‘middle-aged’ and ‘elderly’. Nominal level data can be categorized, but the rank cannot have an obvious order. For example, people’s religion affiliation can be Jewish, Orthodox, Islamic, Protestant, Roman Catholics and no religion, but you cannot rank these religion affiliations orderly. I highlighted the categories of data because different statistical techniques are only appropriate for particular types of variables, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

I conducted univariate analysis (the distribution of variables) and bivariate analysis (mainly Independent Samples T-test and cross-tabulation) for the quantitative data. The distribution of variables could be performed by a frequency table that can be used to check the shape of the whole distribution (De Vaus, 2002). In my study, I made a number of frequency tables, for example, the frequency distribution of final year undergraduates’ salary expectations, as shown in Table 4. 7.

Table 4.7 Frequency distribution for final year undergraduates' salary expectations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	.7	.7	.7
	2	92	21.5	21.5	22.2
	3	155	36.3	36.3	58.5
	4	94	22.0	22.0	80.6
	5	26	6.1	6.1	86.7
	6	25	5.9	5.9	92.5
	7	6	1.4	1.4	93.9
	8	8	1.9	1.9	95.8
	9	18	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	427	100.0	100.0	

In terms of bivariate analysis, firstly, Independent Samples T-test is used when a researcher wants to compare the mean of scores of two different groups, which is appropriate when the researcher has at least one interval level variable (Pallant, 2007). When applied to the present study, it has been used to compare means of some interval variables, such as males' and females' salary expectations and their job preferences. One example of using the method was to compare male final year undergraduates' salary expectations with those of their female counterparts. The T-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in scores of males ($M=2215.8$, $SD=994.76$) and females ($M=1998.9$, $SD=727.23$, $T(425)=2.6$, $P=.012$).

Cross-tabulation is widely used to detect an association between two variables (Baker, 1999; De Vaus, 2002). However, it is a sort of non-parametric technique that is ideal to use when data are measured on nominal (categorical) and ordinal (ranked) scales (Pallant, 2007). The present study also employs the method to check if there was an association between two nominal variables, such as, gender and occupational expectations (mainly the 'Party Agency and Social Organizations' and 'Education' occupations), gender and work-life orientations, gender and the expectations of work-life orientation for their spouses, gender and the responsibility for looking after the children, gender and working region expectations, gender and the relationship

between males' and females' working regions expectations and their places of origin. For example, Table 4.8 shows the relationship between gender and final year undergraduates' working region expectations, which shows that there was a significant association between gender and working region expectations ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4.8 Cross-tabulation of final year undergraduates' working region expectations by gender

Expected working regions	Male	Female
Northeast China	10.4 %	2.9 %
East China	51.1	36.2
Central China	31.3	54.1
West China	7.2	6.8
Total	N=182	N=233
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=8.7$, $df=3$, $P=0.03$	

With respect to qualitative data, the first step was to use verbatim transcription to transcribe the 24 interview recordings, since I was allowed to record 24 interviews and the other two interviewees refused to be recorded. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in Chinese. However, I have translated part of the interviewees' words as evidence to support my argument in the study.

Then, I followed a thematic analysis approach to analyze the interview data. Although thematic analysis has been widely used in the qualitative analysis, there is no agreed idea about what thematic analysis is (e.g., Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) argue that 'thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. The study also agrees with Braun and Clarke's definition of thematic analysis.

I used thematic analysis largely because of its flexibility, which means that it is 'independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Therefore, it could be widely and flexibly used to provide a rich, detailed account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006); these researchers also warn that there are a number of

decisions to be made when using it. For instance, how to decide what you need, is it a rich description of the data or a detailed account of a particular issue, inductive or theoretical analysis, essentialist epistemology or constructionist epistemology, semantic themes or latent themes? Having considered the research questions and theoretical framework in the study, I intend to conduct a theoretical analysis, which aims to address a detailed account of a particular issue and to identify the latent themes. Meanwhile, the epistemology of the thematic approach will be constructionist which ‘seeks to theorize the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 85). This is compatible with the theoretical framework of the current study.

Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) have provided a step-by-step guide of doing thematic analysis:

- Step 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data. Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
- Step 2: Generating initial codes. Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
- Step 3: Searching for themes. Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
- Step 4: Reviewing themes. Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
- Step 5: Defining and naming themes. Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
- Step 6: Producing the report. The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

I have applied their ideas to the present study, which will be discussed below.

Familiarizing myself with the data. In this stage, I transcribed the interviews immediately after the main study, and read them again and again so that I was familiar with the interview data. I also attempted to obtain some general ideas about interviewees’ answers toward each question.

Generating initial codes. The focus of this stage is coding. As argued by Charmaz

(1995, p. 37), ‘coding is the process of defining what the data are all about’; therefore, coding in thematic analysis is the process of identifying themes or concepts that are in the data (Ozzy, 2002). In thematic analysis, coding could be classified into three kinds of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The open coding normally tends to code as much important information that the interviewee provides as possible, therefore, the number of codes is huge. It is a ‘part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 62). While in the present study, as shown in Table 4.9, I had 12 open codings which helped to identify the valid information disclosed by the interviewee. Then, the axial coding aims to ‘integrate codes around the axes of central categories’ (Ozzy, 2002, p. 91). While in this stage, open codings should be grouped into a more overarching coding. Therefore, I grouped the 12 codes into 3 overarching codings, see Table 4.9. Finally, the selective coding includes the identification of the core category or story around which the analysis focuses (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In applying this to the present study, I have shown the codes for the research - factors affecting final year undergraduates’ occupational expectations. The codes show this is a twofold reason: no competitiveness (e.g., bachelor’s degree and not from a prestigious university) to be able to work in biopharmaceutical company and a personal preference to be working in a secondary school.

Searching for, reviewing, defining and naming themes. In terms of step 3, 4 and 5, it is suggested that firstly we need to combine different codes to form a potential overarching theme, and then to review the theme and finally to name it if having a satisfactory thematic map of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The following networks presented in Figure 4.4 to Figure 4.6, as examples, showed how a thematic map got refined in the present study. As can be seen in those three figures, themes in the beginning stage (Figure 4.4) have been gradually reduced and have therefore been refined to some overarching themes in the final stage (Figure 4.6).

Producing the report. After identifying the relationships among various themes, I then switch to report the data which will be shown in the research findings chapters.

Table 4.9 Coding of the thematic analysis in the study

Transcription	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
<p>A transcription of college seniors' employment expectations</p> <p>Date: 9th June, 2009 Venue: The Student Affairs Office, P University he interviewee: L, female, major: Biological Technology The interviewer: Jian Zhu Q-the interviewer A-the interviewee</p> <p>Occupational expectations Q: Why did you choose the “education” occupation? A: <i>I like to be a teacher</i> (coding 2). Q: Why not choose to work in some biopharmaceutical companies (coding 3)? A: Are you talking about biopharmaceutical companies? Well, I am studying in <i>a mediocre university, not a national elite university</i> (coding 4). What is more, I think applicants who have <i>a master's degree or PhD degree</i> (coding 5) will be more welcome. Therefore, <i>I do not think I could have the same opportunity as those who have postgraduate degrees</i> (coding 6). What is more, <i>I like being a secondary school teacher</i> (coding 7). Firstly, I will be <i>less stressful</i> (coding 8) than I would work in other occupations. Secondly, I could have <i>long vacations</i> (coding 9). Thirdly, I could have the chance to <i>communicate with students</i> (coding 10) which not only helps students to get improved, but also a good change to improve myself. Finally, I like <i>the environment</i> (coding 11), such as the libraries and sport centres. Hence, I think I would have <i>a successful career</i> (coding 12) in a secondary school.</p>	<p>Coding 1: basic information about the interview</p> <p>Coding 2: <i>to be a teacher</i> Coding 3: <i>a job more matchable to her programme</i> Coding 4: <i>a mediocre not an elite university</i> Coding 5: <i>postgraduate degrees</i> Coding 6: <i>less opportunity</i> Coding 7: <i>personal preference</i> Coding 8: <i>less stressful</i> Coding 9: <i>long vocations</i> Coding 10: <i>teacher-student relationship</i> Coding 11: <i>working environment</i> Coding 12: <i>successful career</i></p>	<p>Coding 1: not to work in relevant company but to be a teacher working in a secondary school</p> <p>Coding 2: Disadvantage: degree and the university's reputation</p> <p>Coding 3: personal preferences (less pressure, long vocations, working environment, communication with students)</p>	<p>Factor affecting occupational choices: not very competitive to work in a biopharmaceutical company and personal preference to be a secondary school teacher</p>

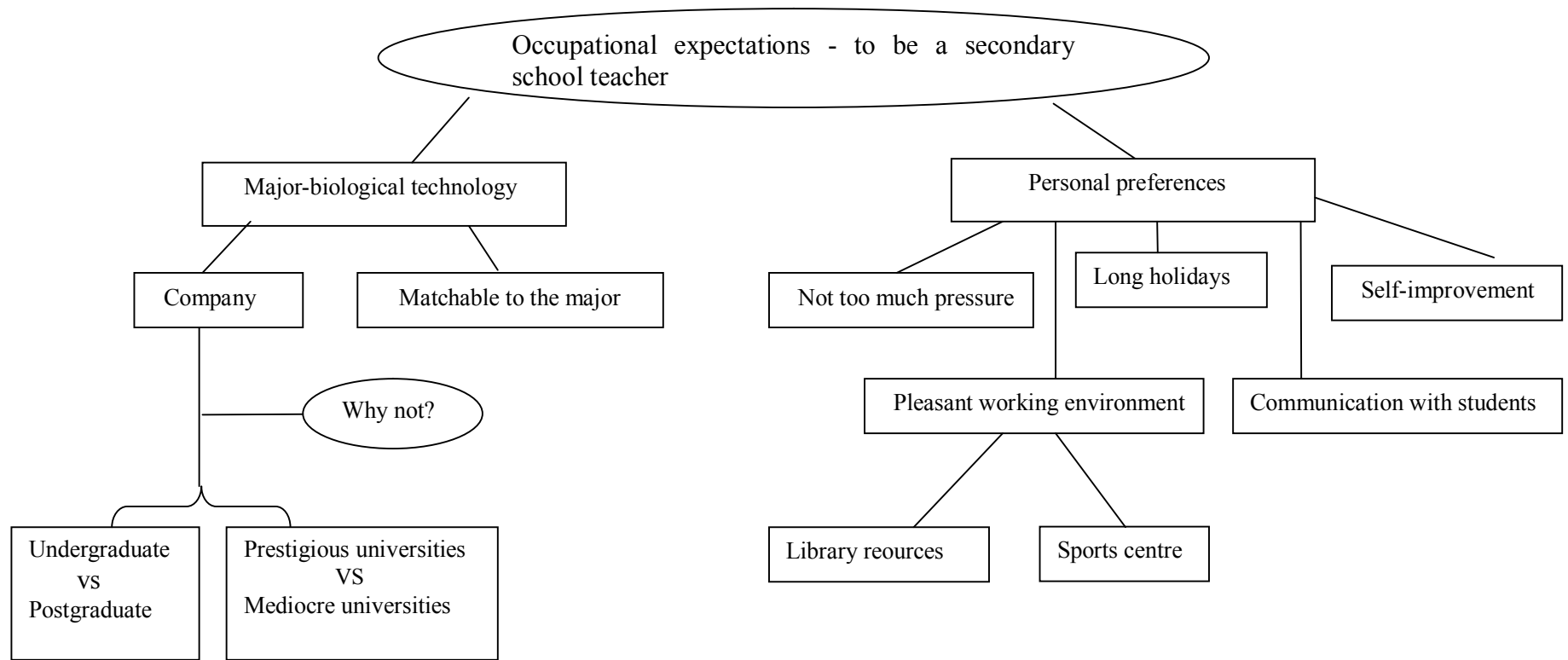


Figure 4.4 Initial thematic map

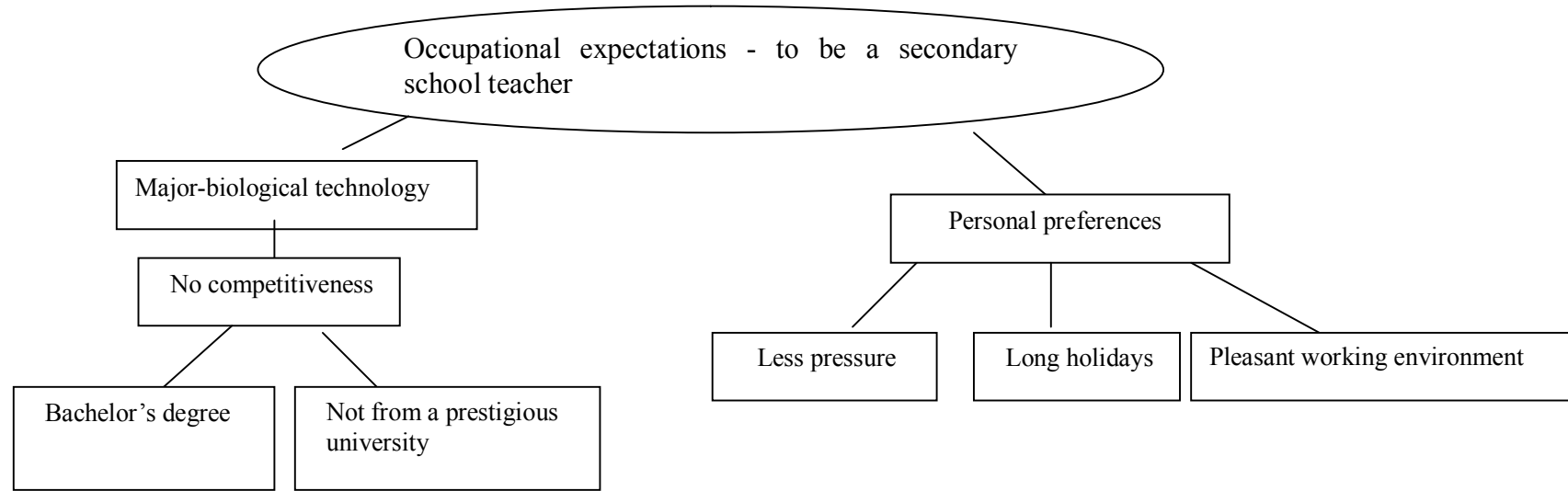


Figure 4.5 Developed thematic map

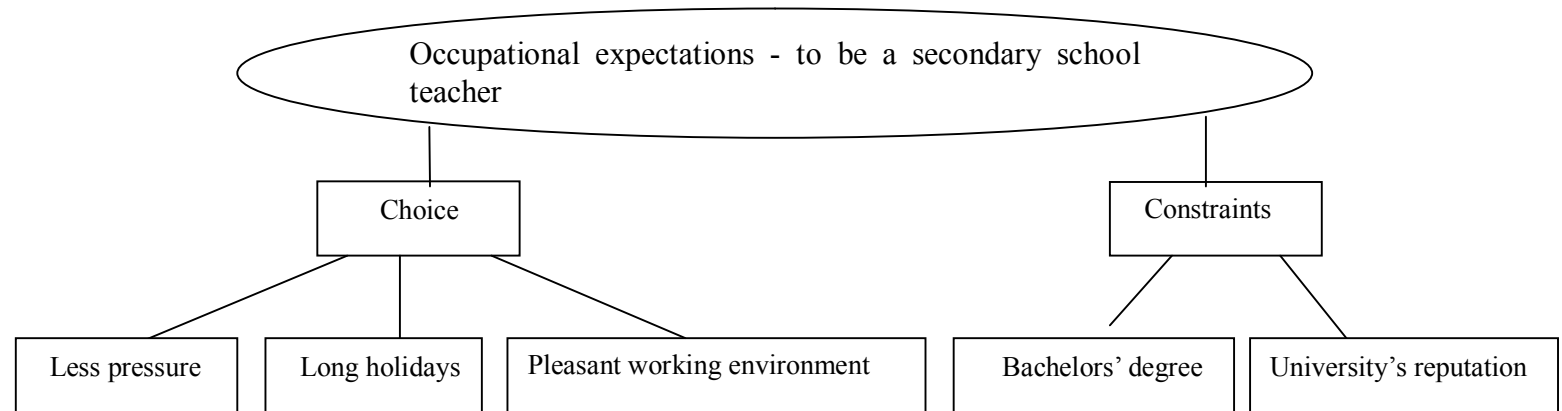


Figure 4.6 Final thematic map

Data display

The data display stage involves ‘reducing the information into appropriate and simplified gestalts or easily understood configurations’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Therefore, in the present study, I used tables to display quantitative data, which can be seen in the research findings that will be presented in chapter five, six and seven later. While for qualitative data, direct quotations have been introduced to display the interview data, being presented in the research findings chapters.

Data integration

In this stage, ‘all data are integrated into a coherent or two separate sets of coherent wholes (quantitative or qualitative)’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 377). In general mixed methods research, data integration normally happens at the data interpretation stage where quantitative and qualitative data are integrated (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In the mixed-methods sequential designs, there are two possibilities for the integration. Firstly, it could occur in the intermediate stage when the results emerging from the first phase of the study inform or guide the data collection in the following phase (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006). Secondly, grounded in results from the quantitative phase, the qualitative phase could explore those results in more depth (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006).

When it applies to the present study, data integration is performed as follows. Firstly, as guided by Tashakkori and Teddlie’s advice, this study has employed both quantitative and qualitative data to interpret gender differences in final year undergraduates’ expectations of the ‘Education’ and ‘Party Agency and Social Organizations’ occupations, as will be discussed in great detail in chapter six. Secondly, inspired by Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006), the quantitative data were used to find out whether or not there were gender differences in final year undergraduates’ employment expectations, broken down by salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations. If so, the qualitative data then helped to identify what factors have actually contributed to the gender

differences. Therefore, data integration has happened at the intermediate stage in that it facilitated an appropriate interview schedule formulation that is mainly based on the results of the questionnaire data.

Moreover, as discussed before in this chapter, the purpose of qualitative data in this study is to help explain the results emerging from the quantitative data with great depth. For example, the quantitative data found that males generally had higher salary expectations than females, but failed to give more detailed account. However, through qualitative data, it was found that this was because males and females believed that they would play different gender roles in a family and sex discrimination had quite different impact on females from that on males, as will be discussed in chapter five.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given an account of the research design and methodology in the present study. Throughout, it has employed a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, which is largely decided by the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. It has used an on-site self-administration questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview as instruments to collect research data. Then, addressing the research questions and reflecting the theoretical framework, it has shown the construction of the questionnaire and the formulation of interview schedule based on the existing literature. Opportunity sampling has been used in the pilot for both the questionnaire survey and the interview. Purposive sampling has been employed for both the questionnaire survey and the interview in the main study.

Also, the ethical consideration has been considered by using the conventions of voluntary participation, informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality. Then, reliability and validity is examined by using Creswell and Plano Clark's advice. With regard to data analysis in the study, the present study critically employs Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) seven-stage mixed methods data analysis process. Having finished analyzing the research data, it then switches to data reporting in the following chapters.

Chapter Five: Gender Differences in Final Year Undergraduates' Salary Expectations

5.1 Introduction

As presented in the introduction chapter, people's employment expectations shape their long-term career choice (Holland, Gottfredson and Baker, 1990; Patton and Creed, 2007; Schoon and Parsons, 2002). In China, most final year undergraduates in HEIs will embark on their first jobs if they are not going to continue their education as postgraduates. Therefore, it would be important to shed some light on males' and females' expectations of first jobs, given that they are on the edge of starting their careers. As mentioned before, in this study, those final year undergraduates' employment expectations of first jobs have been broken down into three expectations: salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations, which will be addressed in chapter five, six and seven, respectively.

This chapter will focus on gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations. It firstly situates the topic in a wider analysis of gender differences in university graduates' actual salaries, and then considers whether or not there are gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations when taking into account the programmes studied and their social backgrounds. Finally, it attempts to identify factors that have contributed to the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations.

5.2 Gender differences in university graduates' actual salaries

As discussed in the background chapter, gender equality has almost been achieved in relation to the numbers of men and women enrolment, but not in relation to the subjects studied. However, gender equality has not been achieved in the Chinese graduate labour market. One example is that female university graduates still get a lower salary than their male counterparts. For instance, in 2008, female university graduates got 1,988 RMB (around 300 US dollars) each month six months after their graduation, compared with 2,249 RMB for their male peers (Mycos, 2009).

There are even gender differences in graduates' starting salaries for men and women in the same subject area (see Table 5.1). Males had higher salaries in male-dominated programmes such as Geological Minerals and Mechanical Engineering, where women only made up about 20 per cent of the graduate cohort (Mycos, 2009). Differences in starting salaries were also evident in female-dominate programmes, for example, Foreign Language Studies (79%). There was, however, one exception which was that in the Material Sciences programme, a male-dominate programme (77%), female university graduates did get higher salaries than their male peers.

Table 5.1 Gender differences in actual salaries for university graduates in 2008

Programme	Male	Female
Geological Minerals	3,073	2,334
Mechanical Engineering	2,324	2,255
Economics	2,391	2,168
<i>Material Science</i>	<i>2,084</i>	<i>2,114</i>
Foreign Language Studies	2,552	2,220
Chinese Studies	2,016	1,871
Education	1,928	1,796
Journalism and Media	2,319	2,057
Fine Art	2,228	1,897
Business Management	2,228	1,897

Sources: Mycos, 2009. **Note:** Unit in Chinese RMB.

5.3 Gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations

5.3.1 Gender, programmes and salary expectations

Males and females differed considerably regarding their expected monthly salaries for their first jobs (see Table 5.2). Overall, females only expected 90 percent of their male counterparts' expected monthly salary. Moreover, the Independent Samples T-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in scores of males ($M=2,215.8$, $SD=994.76$) and females ($M=1,998.9$, $SD=727.23$, $T(425)=2.6$, $P=.012$). However, if these data are analyzed by academic programmes, males had a higher salary expectation than females only in some programmes, for example, Physics; while in other programmes, females tended to expect a higher salary than males, such as Education. In the Information Engineering programme, males and females had the same salary expectations.

Table 5.2 Final year undergraduates' average salary expectations by programme and gender, N=427

Programme	Male		N	Female		N
	M	SD		M	SD	
Law	1,930	814.96	25	1,938	527.76	24
Journalism, TV and Broadcast	2,250	707.11	2	1,617	399.40	7
Chinese	3,050	1350.93	9	1,417	288.68	24
Education	1,850	223.61	4	1,950	570.09	4
Economics	1,950	902.38	15	1,750	530.33	17
History	2,286	1100.07	14	1,962	532.41	23
Fine Art	2,827	1497.86	13	2,013	855.84	19
Biological Technology	1,821	432.22	11	1,977	817.42	14
Maths and Applied Maths	2,058	749.36	26	2,202	650.06	31
Communication Engineering	2,389	951.86	18	1,779	544.02	17
Physics	2,798	1128.10	21	2,575	1115.38	20
Information Engineering	2,083	1046.54	15	2,083	1096.53	15
English Education	2,250	816.5	4	2,028	640.51	15
Applied Chemistry	1,904	921.61	13	1,750	408.25	7
Total	2,216	994.77	190	1,999	727.23	237

Note:

1. M=mean, SD=standard deviation.
2. Unit in Chinese Yuan, the same as Table 6.2, Table 6.3 and Table 6.4

5.3.2 Gender, social backgrounds and salary expectations

5.3.2.1 Measurements of family backgrounds

It is recognized across a wide range of disciplines that family background, measured by parental education, family income, social class and place of origin, has a major impact on children's educational outcome and career choices (Blau and Ferber, 1991; Lefebvre and Merrigan, 1998; Lei and Zhong, 2005; Peraita and Sanchez, 1998).

Parental education

For the purpose of the analysis, parents' education levels were grouped into higher education and non-higher education because the existing literature argues that it is a higher education degree that could make a considerable difference in the salary expectations in western countries (e.g., Brunello, Lucifora and Winter-Ebmer, 2001), and in China, studies find that fathers' higher education experience has a positive impact on their children's starting salaries (e.g., Wen, 2006). This study also attempts to find out if mother's higher education experiences have an impact on their children's salary expectations.

Parental occupation

This study adopts Lu, X. Y.'s (2002) classification of occupations in China mainly because his classification is based on China's peculiar context which has been changing drastically in the past three decades. The classification system has been

considerately valuable (Yan, 2009), and it is based on the occupational classification and the social, economic and cultural capital each occupation possesses, which is more properly used to explore people's social class (Wang, 2009). In Lu's classification, social class has been grouped into ten categories: officials, managers in state and private company, private entrepreneurs, professional and technician, clerk and related workers, individual business, businesses service personnel, industrial workers, agricultural labours and unemployed/semi-unemployed & jobless people (see Figure 5.1).

Scholars argue that the ten categories of occupational classifications could be further grouped into three broad sets: upper class, including officials, managers and private entrepreneurs; middle class, encompassing professional and technician, clerk and related workers and individual business; and lower class, consisting of businesses service personnel, industrial workers, agricultural labours and unemployed or semi-unemployed (e.g., Lu, 2004; Wang, 2009). Studies also find that father's upper class background has a quite obvious impact on their children's starting salaries in China (e.g., Wen, 2006). For example, Wen (2006) argued that the employment rate of university graduates whose fathers belonged to the upper class was above the average level. In contrast, the employment rate of graduates whose fathers belonged to middle and low class was below the level. Therefore, this study employs his ideas in that the occupational classifications have been grouped into two categories: upper class and non-upper class. This study also tries to examine if mother's upper class backgrounds have an impact on their children's salary expectations.

Family income

Originally, there were nine options of family income in the questionnaire which now has been collapsed into three categories: lower level, medium level plus high level.

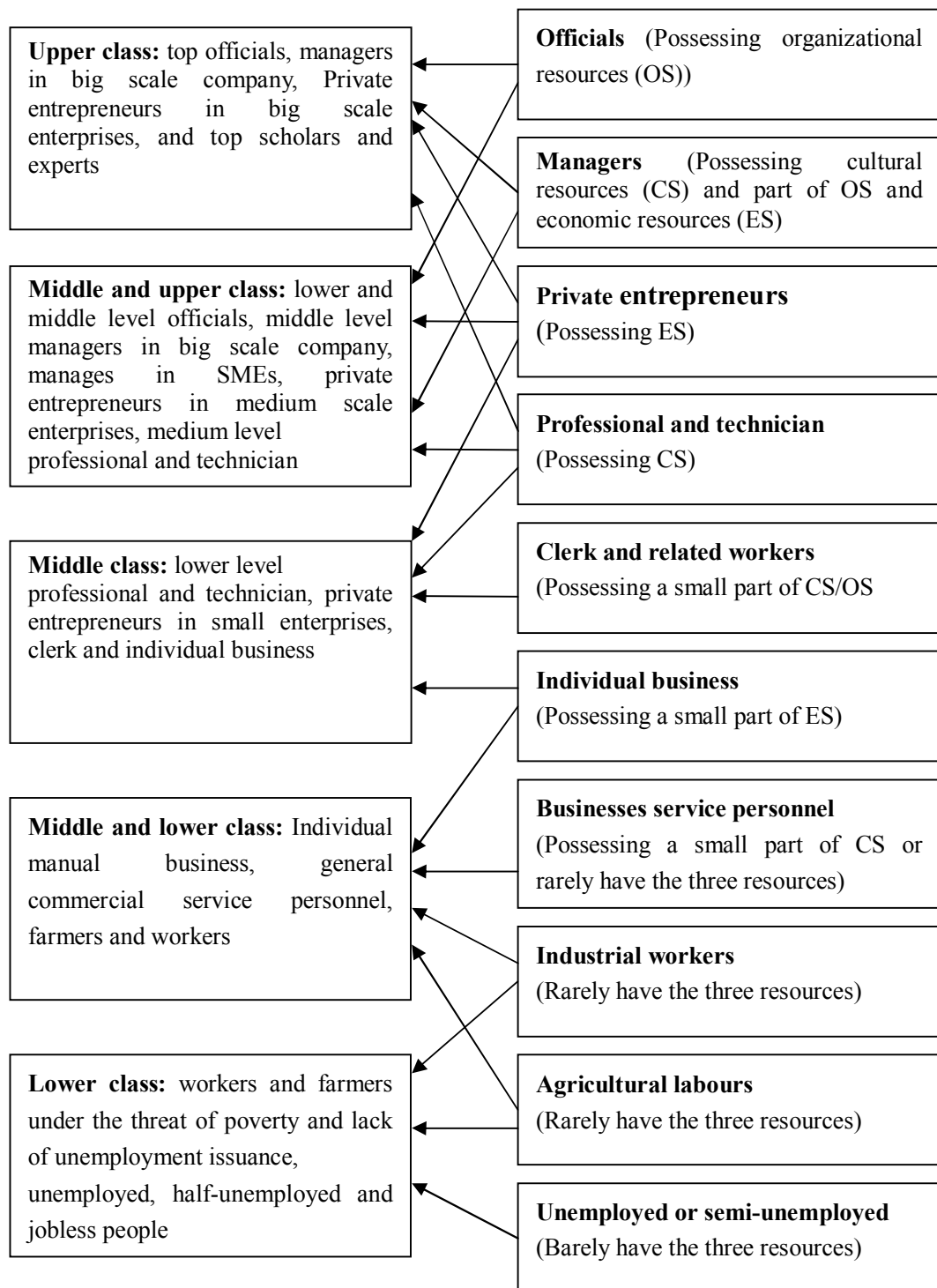


Figure 5.1 Structure of social class in contemporary China

Source: Lu, X. Y., 2002, p. 44.

However, there is no consensus about how to define medium level income. For example, Yan (2004) argues that personal annual income ranging from 10,000 RMB to 40,000 RMB can be regarded as 'medium level income'. Zhu (2007) has also echoed Yan's argument about how to define the medium level income. Nowadays, a more accepted version of how to define the medium level income has been proposed by a research team commissioned by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of China who argue that family annual income ranging from 53,700 RMB to 160,000 RMB could be labeled as 'medium level income' (The research team in Academy of Macroeconomic Research of NDRC, 2005; Wang and Wang, 2007). Therefore, the definition of medium level income has been employed in this study. Based on this, family income has been collapsed into three groups: lower income (less than 53,700 RMB each year), medium income (53,700 RMB to 160,000 RMB) and higher income (above 160,000 RMB).

Place of origin

Final year undergraduates' places of origin have been originally classified into four groups: rural areas, counties and towns, small and medium cities as well as big cities, which is according to the Classification of Administrative Area of China (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2005). The 'big cities' group contains four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing) as well as the provincial city in each province and autonomous region in China. The 'small and medium cities' group includes the prefecture-level cities (*dijishi*) and county-level cities (*xianjishi*), the group 'counties and towns' encompasses various counties (*xian*) and towns (*zhen*), and an area entitled 'cun' or equivalent usually belongs to the countryside of China.

For the purpose of data analysis, I have grouped the four categories into the

urban-rural spectrum. Urban areas include counties and towns, small and medium cities as well as big cities; while rural areas refer to geographically isolated areas in China, since there have been a big gap between urban and rural China in terms of socio-economic conditions (Qiao, 2008; Sicular *et al.*, 2007).

5.3.2.2 Gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations by family backgrounds

As can be seen in Table 5.3, final year undergraduates whose parents possessed higher education degrees had a higher salary expectation than those whose parents did not, applying to both males and females. Within each category, males were more inclined to have higher salary expectations than their female peers.

Table 5.3 Final year undergraduates' average salary expectations by parents' education level and gender

Parents' education level	Male	Female
Non-HE for both parents	2,141 (152)	1,942 (182)
Father-HE, mother-non-HE	2,403 (13)	2,142 (28)
Father-non-HE, mother-HE	3,250 (1)	2,000 (2)
Dual HE	2,361 (18)	2,178 (21)
Single parent	2,750 (5)	2,250 (2)
No response	N=1	N=2
Total	N=190	N=237

Note:

1. HE=higher education.
2. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

As far as parental occupations were concerned, based on Table 5.4, it appears that final year undergraduates whose parents possessed jobs belonging to upper class tended to have a higher salary expectation than those whose parents did not get any jobs in the occupation, which was the case for both males and their female counterparts. What is more, it can be found that parents' upper class background had a stronger influence in improving males' salary expectation than in improving those of their female peers. From a gender gap dimension, the largest gender gap of

expected salary (875 Yuan) happened in the situation where mother had upper class background and the father did not. However, it might be overshadowed by the small sample size. While the smallest (102 Yuan) was linked to the fact that father had an upper class background whilst the mother did not.

Table 5.4 Final year undergraduates' average salary expectations by parents' occupation and gender

Parents' occupations	Male	Female
Non-upper class for both parents	2,125 (140)	1,965 (172)
Father-upper class, mother-non upper class	2,185 (17)	2,083 (27)
Father-non-upper class, mother-upper class	3,000 (2)	2,125 (4)
Dual upper class	2,942 (13)	2,178 (21)
Single parent	2,750 (5)	2,250 (2)
No response	N=13	N=11
Total	N=190	N=237

Note:

1. Sample sizes are in parentheses.
2. Unit in Chinese Yuan

When it comes to family income, as can be seen in Table 5.5, apart from those who did not reply to the question, final year undergraduates who came from medium income families tended to have higher salary expectations than those who came from low income families, which is the case for both males and females. What is more, within each group, males were more likely to expect higher salary expectations than their female counterparts.

Table 5.5 Final year undergraduates' average salary expectations by family income and gender, N=427

Family income	Male	Female
High income	0	0
Medium income	2,717 (17)	2,416 (6)
Low income	2,212 (146)	1,969 (171)
No response	37	60
Total	190	237

Note: Sample sizes are in parentheses.

With regard to the place of origin, final year undergraduates from urban China had higher salary expectations, compared with those from rural China, regardless of their gender (see Table 5.6). From a gender gap view, the gender gap has been

strengthened by final year undergraduates' urban background. As shown in the Table 5.6, the gender gap of expected monthly salary for final year undergraduates coming from rural China was 174 Yuan, and the comparable number of their urban counterparts increased to 230 Yuan. Additionally, cross-gender and group comparisons revealed that male final year undergraduates coming from rural China had higher salary expectations than those females from urban China.

Table 5.6 Final year undergraduates' average salary expectations by places of origin and gender, N=427

Place of Origin	Male	Female
Rural China	2,125 (76)	1,951 (92)
Urban China	2,259 (113)	2,029 (145)
No response	N=1	N=0
Total	190	237

Note: Sample sizes are in parentheses.

5.4 Factors affecting gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations

The questionnaire data show that overall male final year undergraduates tended to have higher salary expectations than their female peers. To understand those gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations, I now explore factors affecting gender differences in those salary expectations by using the interview data. In this study, interviewees were asked how much salary they expected to earn every month for their first jobs and the reasons underpinning their choices were also explored. Interviewees were also asked to comment on the results emerging from the questionnaire data which was that male final year undergraduates generally had higher salary expectations than their female peers. Basically, two broad themes were identified: 1) the economic roles being played in the family by husband and wife, and 2) the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in the labour market, which appeared to contribute to the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations.

5.4.1 The economic roles being played in the family between husband and wife

The interview data show that almost all the interviewees believed that males should play a main role in supporting a family financially and females could work, but their economic roles are supplementary. Therefore, to play the roles properly, males expected higher salary expectations than their female peers, since they have to support the whole family.

The economic role differences between husband and wife

For quite a large number of male interviewees (10 of 13), it seemed very natural for them to shoulder the main economic responsibility in their small families (refer to a family consisting of mother, father and children), willingly or reluctantly. For example, this was Xiang's explanation.

My consideration is that as a male, I have to take the main responsibility to purchase a flat. If I get a salary of 3,000 Yuan each month, then I will get around 40,000 Yuan each year. As I am planning to buy a flat when I am 30 years old, which will cost me 200,000 Yuan for the first payment, and then I can pay by instalment. Therefore, I have to prepare myself for that. (Xiang, male, major in Physics)

Then, he added:

After my graduation, I will get married very soon. As for marriage, I need a huge amount of money, such as purchasing a flat in a city and buying a car. As a male, one can do nothing but earn money. (Xiang, male, major in Physics)

This argument has been echoed by quite a number of male interviewees. For example, Zhang argued that:

Males have to face more pressures, especially economic pressure, than females when they graduate from universities. After their graduation, males become independent of their parents in terms of economic issues, which means that they cannot obtain economic support from their parents any more, rather, they have to earn some money to support their parents as a way to show their filial piety. What is more, males have to think about how to establish their families that need a huge amount of money. Quite a lot of my friends also have similar ideas. Therefore, I think males' higher salary

expectations are mainly because of the economic pressure they will face in the very near future. (Zhang, male, major in Biological Technology)

As can be seen, some male interviewees had to financially support not only their small families, but also, as a way to show their filial piety to their parents, they tended to support extended families (refers to a family including three generations: grandparents, mother and father as well children).

In contrast, the majority of female interviewees (11 out of 13) seemed to have less economic pressure in a family, and they thought they needed to work, but they did not have to equally share the financial responsibility in the family. For example, the following quotations show how a female interviewee accounted for males' higher salary expectation than females.

Females expected salaries that could afford their daily expenditures, and they do not have to shoulder the responsibility of supporting a family financially. However, males are different, and they have to face more pressures, therefore, they expect to get higher salaries than their female peers, which is reasonable. (Chen, female, major in Economics)

Similarly, another female interviewee added her argument about the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations.

According to the Chinese tradition, men have to take the responsibility to purchase a flat after getting married, but for women, they only need to buy small daily essentials, for example, rice and oil, which will not cost too much. Quite a number of male students in our programme think that they cannot get economic support any more from their parents after graduation; they have to earn their own bread and face more pressures as well.

For women, I do not think they have the same pressure as their male peers. For example, quite a number of my friends (female) argue that 'I can use my own salary to buy whatever clothes I like', and quite a lot of them are the so-called 'yueguangzu' (it means people who always spend all their salaries or earnings before the end of the month). So in this sense, they have much fewer pressures than their male counterparts. In contrast, men have huge pressures in the society, so they expect quite higher salaries than women. (Sun, female, major in Law)

The abovementioned quotations of those interviewees may suggest that male and female university students, a well-educated group, still had quite traditional ideas about the economic roles division between husband and wife in the family. The

economic role differences between the genders may partly account for the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations.

The traditional economic role differences in the family: whether it could be changed?

Having recognised the traditional economic role differences held by male and female interviewees, I then probed into their insights about whether or not the traditional economic role differences between husband and wife in the family were acceptable or could be challenged in contemporary China. Surprisingly, a majority of both male (9 of 13) and female (10 of 13) interviewees contended that they accepted the traditional economic role division between husband and wife in the family, and they also argued that it would be difficult to change the persisting situation.

Here are some male interviewees' points. For example, Nie put it:

Although the Chinese government advocates and publishes the gender equality policy, men are still playing a major role in supporting the family financially; by contrast, women could rely on men in terms of supporting the family. I think it is quite normal for women to have such an idea.

Q: Do you want to change it?

A: Of course, but it is really difficult to change this situation.

Q: Why?

A: Because women are disadvantaged in many ways, hence, it would be tough to change it.

Q: Why are women in an unfavourable position?

A: There might be two reasons. Firstly, women will have maternity leave, and it seems more appropriate for women to look after the family. Secondly, social expectation may also bring into women's unequal treatment. As we know, there are quite a small number of women leaders in China. (Nie, male, major in Chinese)

While for quite a number of female interviewees, again, they thought it would be acceptable. For example, this is Zhou's ideas.

I think it is normal to accept the fact that men play a major role in supporting a family and women play a less important role. It is a social norm that is really difficult to get changed, although a wide range of gender equality policies have been published. Men and women cannot be equal in a short time; it takes time to achieve gender equality in China. (Zhou, female, major in Education)

These interviewees' ideas may reveal that the traditional economic role division between husband and wife in the family has long existed in China, therefore, born and educated in such a context, they might be socialised to meet the society's expectations. As a result, they would continue to play the gendered economic roles that have been entrenched a long time ago. What is more, the gendered economic roles have become a social norm, so it would be difficult to change.

5.4.2 The experienced or perceived sex discrimination in the labour market

The interviewees were asked to what extent their genders affected their job seeking. The interview data reported that the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in the labour market might also account for the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations.

Various formats of experienced or perceived sex discrimination

Women are more likely to suffer from sex discrimination than men in China's labour market, as shown in chapter two. When asked whether or not female interviewees encountered sex discrimination during their job-seeking process, more than half of them (7 out of 13) reported that they experienced sex discrimination. The rest of female interviewee noted that they have not faced sex discrimination partly because they were looking for jobs in female-dominated occupations, for example, being a secretary. Another reason for some female interviewees not experiencing sex discrimination was that they had few job seeking experiences. However, among those who addressed sex discrimination in the labour market, they claimed that sex discrimination had a quite big impact on their job seeking.

For example, a female interviewee Wei studying the Physics programme told me

that:

Sex discrimination has had a quite large impact on my job seeking. For example, I went to a job fair held in Central China and submitted my CV to a prestigious secondary school in North China. A few days later, I called the President of the school and had a nice conversation with him which could be a job interview. But finally, I was refused by the school. I wondered why at the very beginning, but then I got the answer, I am female, as told by the President. Well, this is the first time for me to be rejected by a secondary school.

Then, another example is that I went to a secondary school in my place of origin, Central China, I directly got a negative reply from the President of the school directly. They said 'if you are male, we could offer a position'. (Wei, female, major in Physics)

She also added that because she had experienced sex discrimination quite a number of times, she finally lowered her salary expectations. And in the end, she got a job which provided her with a salary much lower than she expected originally.

In a similar vein, Yu, another female interviewee admitted that she also encountered sex discrimination during her job seeking process. For example, she said:

I went to a job fair held in this university and submitted some CVs, but I was very frustrated that day, because quite a large number of employers said 'men are preferable'. I also saw some notes saying 'men first'. (Yu, female, major in Maths and Applied Maths)

On the other hand, the majority of male interviewees (11 out of 13) said they had perceived sex discrimination against female job applicants during their job seeking processes. The other two male interviewees argued that they had not. Among the 11 male interviewees, some reported that they recognized visible sex discrimination against female job applicants, whereas others reported hidden sex discrimination.

Visible sex discrimination against female job applicants could be seen from Zhang's

words.

Let me show you one example that I have seen [sex discrimination against female university students] before. I have been to B city for a job fair last year. One company focusing on medicine had a number of job vacancies in Biology, Medicine and Mechanical Engineering. One female graduating student from a prestigious university in Northeast China majoring in Mechanical Engineering was very eager to get the job. You know, in China, if one wants to get a job, firstly he/she needs to fill in a form which includes his/her gender, major, which university he/she is studying, etc. Firstly the employers were not willing to give the girl a form to complete, since they thought girls were not suitable to do jobs like this, which resulted from the fact that some work was physically demanded. However, the girl was trying her best to show that she has been excellent in her academic performance as well as her social experiences, and finally she got a chance to fill in a form. But judging from the employers' words and behaviours, they would not recruit the girl. So, based on this example, I can feel that one's gender has affected his/her job hunting. (Zhang, male, major in Biological Technology)

This example showed how the employers directly discriminated female university students, by not seriously paying attention to female job applicants or disdaining them, which could even be discerned by others.

Some cases of invisible sex discrimination against female university students could be observed from Hu's quotations.

During my apprenticeship, I found that there was no female employee in my workshop that focused on communication engineering. Surprisingly, I was told that there were only 4 female employees in such a big company with more than 200 staff, and they worked as secretaries. It seems fairly tough for females to enter this sort of occupation - communication engineering. What is more, there are over 20 female students in our class, but so far, nobody has got a job in the communication engineering field, rather, they have switched to other jobs like marketing or teaching. (Hu, male, major in Communication Engineering)

Hu's example may reveal that the threshold of some traditional male-dominated occupations is too high for females, and even they have entered the field, they have

not really played a proper role, rather, they have been marginalised, which could be regarded a kind of invisible sex discrimination against females.

The above examples may show that female final year undergraduates realized the existing sex discrimination in the labour market. Therefore, to get a job, they had to lower their salary expectations or even enter female-dominated occupations that were not as well paid as those in male-dominated ones. Even though they got the opportunity to make their inroads into male-dominated occupations, they have not been integrated into the mainstream of occupations. Instead, they worked in the lower level of the career hierarchy.

Interviewees' attitudes towards sex discrimination

As far as sex discrimination against women is concerned, the majority of male (10 out of 13) and female (9 out of 13) interviewees thought it was acceptable. Only a small number of male (1 of 13) and female (3 of 13) interviewees argued that it was unfair, and that males and females should be equal. The rest reported that they did not have any feelings about sex discrimination against women.

Firstly, for the majority of male and female interviewees, given that they realized that sex discrimination against women has long existed and it would be difficult to avoid, they tend to accept sex discrimination against women in the labour market. The following quotations illustrate their ideas.

I have to accept that females get lower salaries than their male peers in current China. Given that China has been affected by the traditional ideas that males are superior to females. Females' social status has been improved a lot, they, however, still have to face unequal treatment. Now, I think gender equality could not be achieved in a short time. So I have to accept the current gender inequality, including sex discrimination against females in the labour market. For example, quite a lot of university graduates will get married and have a baby after they get their first jobs, so the employers of

course have to think about the maternity leave which would cause lots of trouble to them. Therefore, they would give female university graduates fewer chances, which I think, from the perspective of those employers, is normal. (Peng, female, major in Information Engineering)

I think that it is quite acceptable that female university graduates are not paid as well as their male counterparts. But what could you do for that? Nothing, I have to accept the unequal fact. If I were a female, I would think about how to change the unequal treatment I have. If sex discrimination happens to me, I would try to sort it out via enhancing my education credentials. (Zhu, male, major in Applied Chemistry)

These two cases might suggest that facing sex discrimination against women in the labour market, both male and female interviewees would think it is hard to change the unequal treatment on females; therefore, they have no choice but to accept. Very few have seriously thought about how to avoid sex discrimination against females.

Secondly, only a limited number of male and female interviewees believed that sex discrimination against women was unfair, and females should get equal treatment with males. For example, Hu said:

Sometimes I saw some of my female classmates coming back from job fairs; they were frustrated and very pessimistic about their job seeking. Some even cried. In this point, I feel it is unfair for females to face sex discrimination in the labour market. But to be honest, I think it is really difficult to change the situation. (Hu, male, major in Communication Engineering)

One female interviewee majoring in Law also thought it was unfair for females to suffer from sex discrimination in the labour market. For instance, she reported:

I think it is unfair to underestimate women's abilities, but to be honest; I do not have very strong feelings of sex discrimination against females, which might due to the fact that I have never encountered sex discrimination against women during my job seeking process. If it really happened to me, I would have considered how to change it. For example, the government might need to publish some special laws to avoid sex discrimination in the labour market. Also, the implementation of existing laws addressing sex discrimination needs to be strengthened. (Sun, female, major in Law)

These two quotations show that some interviewees felt it unfair for females to suffer from sex discrimination, but they seem to have quite different approaches to dealing with sex discrimination against females. For the male, it seemed he would be helpless when facing sex discrimination. However, for the female, she appeared to have more ideas about how to deal with sex discrimination, which might relate to her programme - Law.

Finally, the rest of the interviewees did not have any feelings about sex discrimination against women in the labour market. One male interviewee, Zhan, majoring in Applied Chemistry, argued that males and females were different, both physically and socially, therefore, he thought the unequal treatment males and females experienced is normal, it was not a kind of discrimination. While one female interviewee Bao, studying Law, contended that she sometimes felt that as a female, she could have some advantages over males in her expected area - hotel management, a kind of female-dominated occupation.

In all, indeed, those interviewees had quite different ideas about sex discrimination against women in the labour market. However, the majority thought it was quite acceptable, as it has been difficult to change or avoid. A small proportion of male and female interviewees thought sex discrimination was unfair; they however had limited strategies for avoiding sex discrimination. Few interviewees were aware of the existence of sex discrimination. These data might suggest that the consciousness of gender equality for both male and female university students was very weak; thus, it is imperative to develop university students' (as well as other people's) consciousness of gender equality in contemporary China.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations. The questionnaire data showed that males generally had higher salary expectations than females. However, it varied when linked to academic programmes and students' family backgrounds. The interview data showed that the economic roles being played by husband and wife in the family and the experienced or perceived sex discrimination against females in the labour market helped to account for gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations. Meanwhile, interviewees' ideas towards the two factors have been explored, and the interview data showed that it seemed that the traditional gendered economic roles in the family and sex discrimination against women were difficult to change and quite a large number of young people interviewed have accepted the long existing *status quo*.

Chapter Six: Gender Differences in Final Year Undergraduates' Occupational Expectations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at gender differences in final year undergraduates' occupational expectations. It begins with a presentation of gender differences in occupational distribution in China's urban labour market, and then discusses male and female university graduates' occupational choices for their first jobs. Next, it presents gender differences in final year under graduates' occupational expectations. It finally endeavours to identify factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in final year undergraduates' occupational expectations.

6.2 Gender differences in occupational distribution in China's urban labour market

Nowadays, the gender difference in labour force participation in China is not as large as that in many other countries (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). For example, in 2009, the female to male ratio of labour force participation in China was 0.91, which ranked 20th in the world (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009). However, sex segregation in China's urban labour market still persists (Wu and Wu, 2009). In China, women are still underrepresented in many occupations and heavily concentrated in others. This study will solely focus on the gender distribution of occupational composition in urban China, since occupational statistics of rural China are difficult to obtain. As shown in Table 6.1, women comprised a very small proportion of occupations like 'Construction', 'Mining', 'Traffic, Transport, Storage

and Post', 'Party Agencies & Social Organization' and 'Scientific Research, Technical Service and Geologic Survey'. On the other hand, women were concentrated in the occupations of 'Health Care, Social Security and Social Welfare', 'Accommodation and Restaurants' as well as 'Primary Education'. Therefore, in this sense, occupations where there were more female than males were more likely to be characterized as serving (e.g., Accommodation and Restaurants) and caring (e.g., Health Care, Social Security and Social Welfare), while occupations where males took a major proportion were often associated with physical strength (e.g., Construction) and power (e.g., Party Agencies and Social Organization) (Anker, Malkas and Korten, 2003; Charles, 2005).

Table 6.1 Employment composition of urban China by sector and gender, 2008

Occupation	Female	Male
Agriculture, forestry, farming of animals and fishing	36.3	63.7
Mining	19.4	80.6
Manufacturing	42.1	57.9
Production and distribution of electricity, gas and water	29.4	70.6
Construction	13.9	86.1
Traffic, transport, storage and post	27.3	72.7
Information transfer, computer services and software	38.8	61.2
Wholesale and retail trade	46.1	53.9
Accommodation and restaurants	54.4	45.6
Finance	50.1	49.9
Real estate	33.9	66.1
Tenancy and business services	34.1	65.9
Scientific research, technical service and geologic survey	31.1	68.9
Management of water conservancy, environment and public establishment	41	59
Resident services and other services	43.6	56.4
Education	49.5	50.5
<i>Primary education</i>	52.9	47.1
<i>Secondary education</i>	46.3	53.7
<i>Higher education</i>	44.1	55.9
Culture, sports and entertainment	41.7	58.3
Health care, social security and social welfare	59.8	40.2
Party agencies and social organization	27.7	72.3
Total	37.6	62.4

Source: China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2009.

Note: Unit in percentage.

6.3 Male and female university graduates' occupational choices for their first jobs

It would be interesting to compare occupational expectations of the research respondents in this study with the occupational choices of university graduates in China as a whole. However, there has been a lack of national statistics of occupational choices for university graduates with respect to their first jobs in China. Therefore, I employ the results of a large on-line survey instead. The survey included 218,000 valid respondents, and originally 444,000 university graduates participated in the survey in 2008 (Mycos, 2009). As shown in Table 6.2, the 'Manufacturing' occupation was the most welcome occupation for university graduates, which was reasonable given that China has been the world manufacture centre for years. It was followed by the 'Culture, Sports, Education and Entertainment' occupation. Another noteworthy occupation was the 'Party Agency and Social Organization', which remained one of the top six desired occupations. However, this table did not include information about gender regarding occupational choices of university graduates.

Table 6.2 The occupational choices of university graduates in 2008

Occupation	Percentage
Manufacturing	27
Culture, sports, education and entertainment	13
Telecom and electronic information service	9
Finance, insurance and real estate	9
Construction	8
Party agency and social organization	6
Medical service, personal service	5
Retail	5
Commercial service, consultation, law and security	4
Electricity, gas, environment and public establishment	3
Traffic, transport, storage and post	3
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3
Mining	2
Accommodation and restaurants	2
Wholesale	1

Source: Mycos, 2009.

In terms of occupational choices for male and female university graduates, there is still occupational sex segregation in the Chinese graduate labour market (Shi and Wang, 2009). In particular, females are more likely to enter female-dominated occupations with a relatively low salary and less likely to entry male-dominated occupations that are technically demanding (World Bank, 2002). As shown in Table 6.3, female university graduates were more likely to enter occupations that were less socially valued and paid, for example, in the ‘Culture, Sports, Education and Entertainment’ occupation, women’s caring characteristics were welcome and the salary (1,968 RMB) of the occupation was also quite low. By contrast, male university graduates tended to enter occupations that require technical skills (Tong, 2005). For instance, in occupations like ‘Electronic and Electric’, professional knowledge was required, which also offered a high salary of 2,401 RMB monthly.

Table 6.3 The top 5 most and least welcome occupations and the salary levels of the occupations for women graduates in 2008

Rank	Most popular occupations	Least popular occupations
1 st	Culture, sports, education and entertainment (1968)	Construction (2228)
2 nd	Accommodation and restaurants (1862)	Geologic survey (NA)
3 rd	Commercial service, consultation, law and security (2225)	Electronic and electric (2401)
4 th	Wholesale (2104)	Power and energy (2334)
5 th	Retail (1985)	Mining and petroleum Extraction (2563)

Source: Mycos, 2009.

Note: Monthly salaries are in the parentheses, unit in Chinese RMB.

6.4 Gender differences in final year undergraduates’ occupational expectations

When it comes to the respondents in this study, as shown in Table 6.4, male final year undergraduates’ occupational expectations were considerably different from those of their female cohorts. In detail, among the top five popular occupations that attracted more than 80 per cent of final year undergraduates, there were more male final year undergraduates than their female counterparts expecting to work in ‘Party

Agencies and Social Organization’, ‘Information Transfer, Computer Services and Software’ and ‘Scientific Research, Technical Service and Geologic Survey’. This gender composition to a great extent reflected the gender composition of the three occupations for males and females as a whole in China’s urban labour market shown in Table 6.1. While in the ‘Education’ and ‘Culture, Sports and Entertainment’ occupations, female final year undergraduates outnumbered their male peers. Because sample sizes in other occupations, for example the ‘Wholesale and Retail Trade’ occupation, were quite small, there would be of little significance in addressing the differences between male final year undergraduates’ occupational preferences and those of their female peers. As the top two most desired occupations were ‘Education’ and ‘Party Agencies & Social Organization’, attracting approximately two-thirds of the respondents, therefore, special attention will be paid to them.

Table 6.4 Final year undergraduates’ occupational expectations by gender, N=427 (In percentage)

Expected occupations	Female	Male
Agriculture, forestry, farming of animals and fishing	0 (0)	0 (0)
Mining	0 (0)	0 (0)
Manufacturing	25 (1)	75 (3)
Production and distribution of electricity, gas and water	100 (1)	0 (0)
Construction	0 (0)	0 (0)
Traffic, transport, storage and post	0 (0)	0 (0)
Information transfer, computer services and software	39.5 (15)	60.5 (23)
Wholesale and retail trade	100 (1)	0 (0)
Accommodation and restaurants	50 (2)	50 (2)
Finance	52.9 (9)	47.1 (8)
Real estate	14.3. (1)	85.7 (6)
Tenancy and business services	12.5 (1)	87.5 (7)
Scientific research, technical service and geologic survey	50 (10)	50 (10)
Management of water conservancy, environment and public establishment	100 (1)	0 (0)
Resident services and other services	71.4 (10)	28.6 (4)
Education	64.7 (121)	35.3 (66)
Culture, sports and entertainment	75.86 (21)	24.14 (7)
Health care, social security and social welfare	33.3 (1)	66.7 (2)
Party agencies and social organization	41.18(35)	58.82(50)
Other	77.8 (7)	22.2 (2)
Total	N=237	N=190

Note: Sample sizes are in parentheses.

As shown in Table 6.5, there was a statistically significant association between gender and occupational expectations preferences. In other words, males were more likely to expect to work in the ‘Party Agency and Social Organization’ occupation; whereas their female peers were inclined to expect to work in the ‘Education’ occupation.

Table 6.5 The distribution of occupational expectations - ‘Education’ and ‘Party Agency and Social Organization’ by gender

Occupational expectations	Male	Female
Education	35.3 %	64.7 %
Party Agency and Social Organization	58.8 %	41.2 %
Total	116	156
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=13.23$, df=1, P=0.000	

Further details about males’ and females’ expectations in the ‘Education’ occupation will emerge if education is broken down into different levels, see Table 6.6. Given that the main destinations of previous graduates in the case university have been upper secondary schools in China, therefore, it is not surprising that most of the respondents expected to work in upper secondary schools. Of course, a small number of students expected to work in other levels of education, such as lower secondary schools or higher education (mainly as supporting staff). However, in addressing the main resort for the research respondents, gender differences exist, with females being more likely to expect work in upper secondary schools than their male peers.

Table 6.6 Males’ and females’ expectations in the ‘Education’ occupation

Education level	Male	Female
Primary education	0	1 (100%)
Lower secondary	7 (31.8%)	15 (68.2%)
Upper secondary	42(38.2%)	68 (61.8%)
Higher education	15(31.2%)	33 (68.8%)
Educational training organizations	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
Other	0	1 (100%)
In total	66	120

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

However, to further address the gendered occupational expectations in this study, it is indispensable to have a glimpse of gender patterns in the two occupations in China.

Gender patterns in the ‘Education’ occupation in China

Women have been increasingly participating in ‘Education’ in the past few years in China. For example, women comprised 42.5% of the whole employees in the occupation in 1997, however, it increased to 49.5% in 2008 (see Table 2.2 for details, p.19). If breaking down the whole education system into primary schools, secondary schools and HEIs, we will find more details about women’s status in the occupation.

As can be seen in Figure 6.1, overall, female full-time teachers comprised the main proportion (more than 54 per cent) of the whole teachers’ cohort in primary schools from 2003 to 2008; while female full-time teachers in secondary schools and HEIs were playing a less important role than their male peers. It is apparent that the higher the educational level, the less proportion of female full-time teachers. In addition, remarkably, the proportion of female full-time teachers continued to increase for all levels of the Chinese education system between 2004 and 2008.

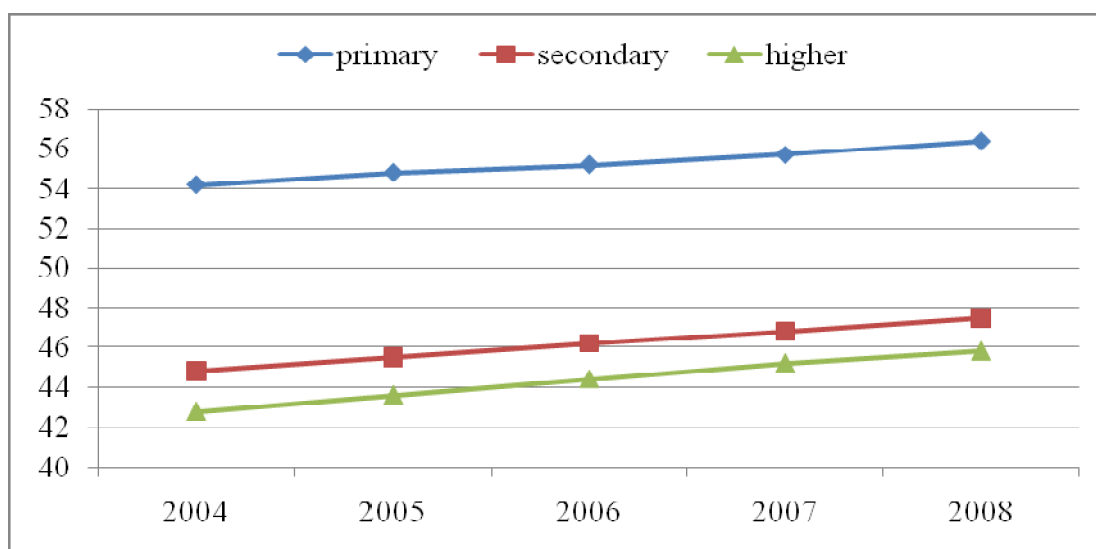


Figure 6.1 The proportion of female full-time teachers in China’s education system, 2004-2008

Source: <http://www.stats.edu.cn>.

Note: Statistics in higher education include regular HEIs and adult HEIs, and secondary education data only contain statistics in general secondary education.

However, if we look at the detailed gender distribution of full-time teachers in rural and urban China, we will find that females are in the majority in urban secondary schools whilst the number of male full-time teachers outstrips that of their female counterparts in rural China (Cai and Gao, 2010). For example, in 2006, the proportions of female full-time teachers in urban China were 63.60% in lower secondary schools and 51.76% in upper secondary schools; the corresponding rates for female full-time teachers in rural China were 40.50% and 39.53% respectively (Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, 2007). Therefore, in this regard, it is reasonable that more than three-fifths of female final year undergraduates expected to work in secondary schools, with 68.2% in lower secondary education and 61.8% in upper secondary education, and they mainly expected to work in urban China. As mentioned in chapter four, graduates of the case university have mainly worked in urban China.

International comparisons (Table 6.7) reveal that: 1) the proportion of female full-time primary school teachers in China was higher than that in relatively poorer countries, such as Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania; but was much lower than that in richer countries, such as Finland, Germany, UK and USA; and 2) this finding could be applied to lower secondary schools as well. Scholars argue that this is because throughout the world, when jobs are scarce, men tend to enter the teaching occupation, especially as secondary school teachers, which largely squeezes women's entry into the occupation, and this mainly happens in relatively poor countries (Riddell, Tett and Winterton, 2006). However, in rich countries, more jobs become available; men have alternatives, so they are less likely to work in teaching (Riddell, Tett and Winterton, 2006). However, it appears that the gender distribution in 'Education' was more balanced in China than that in many other countries.

In sum, overall, the gender composition in 'Education' in China was more balanced than that in many other countries across the world. However, it varied from rural to urban areas in China's secondary schools. There were more female teachers than their male counterparts working in urban secondary schools, compared with more males than females working in rural secondary schools.

**Table 6.7 Percentage of female full-time teachers in some countries
around the world by sector, 2008**

	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
Bangladesh	41.8	19.5	19.6
Chile	78	78	54.6
China	56	47.4	43*
Costa Rica	80	57.7	60
Cuba	76.6	61.2	47.8
Czech Republic	97.6	74.1	58.3
Finland	78.3	71.2	57.7
France	82.4	64.6	53.4
Germany	85.2	61.6	49
Ghana	33	22.7	20.4
Hungary	95.9	78.56	64.8
Kenya	45.5	45.5	37.3
Kuwait	89	55.4	53.5
Mexico	66.4	50.3	44.2
New Zealand	83.5	65.6	57.8
Qatar	85.3	56	55.2
South Korea	77.2	66.3	42.6
Tanzania	50.3	29	30
UK	81	62	62.4
USA	85.6	64	55.7

Source: UNESCO, Data Centre. (2011)

* Data in 2007.

Gender patterns in the ‘Party agencies and social organizations’ occupation in China

Women have been participating in politics in China for decades (Edwards, 2000). However, women still have not got equal rights with men in China’s political sphere (Edwards, 2007; Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2009; Wang, 1999; World Bank, 2002). As can be seen from Table 6.8, women’s political rights were squeezed hugely by their male peers at high level, they only took a relatively small proportion of members both in parliament and in ministerial positions, albeit they had been increasingly participating in the decision-making at the national level. What is more,

women politicians in China normally take positions that concern social issues, for example, education and health (World Bank, 2002). While their male counterparts tend to dominate positions in key areas like national security, finance and foreign relations (World Bank, 2002).

Table 6.8 Women's political empowerment in China at high level

Political empowerment	2006	2007	2008	2009
The proportion of Women in parliament	20	20	21	21
The proportion of Women in ministerial positions	6	6	9	9

Source: Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2006-2009.

Women's status in China's politics at basic level is slightly better than that at high level, but they are still far from equally treated with (see Table 6.9). Although women made up roughly one-third of the membership of grassroots trade unions in China between 2000 and 2007, the proportion continued to decline.

Table 6. 9 Women's political empowerment in China at basic level

Political empowerment	2000	2002	2004	2007
The proportion of women's membership in grassroots trade unions (%)	37.8	34.8	33.27	31.75

Sources: China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2008.

With respect to this study, jobs in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation generally cover a wide variety of categories, of which university graduates are interested in being civil servants. Therefore, special attention will be paid to university graduates pursuing employment as civil servants.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation was one of the top six most welcome occupations for the Chinese university graduates in 2008, however, there was no information about the gender distribution in the occupation. Nevertheless, it could be speculated that male university students were more likely to work in the occupation than their female counterparts, owing to the following two reasons. Firstly, male university students

have performed much better than their female peers with respect to actual participation in political activities (Zhang and Luo, 2006), for example, the election of student leaders during their college life. Secondly, as mentioned earlier in this section, the Chinese politics is generally male-dominated. Therefore, getting access to politics in China would be easier for men than for women.

6.5 Factors contributing to gender differences in final year undergraduates' occupational expectations

The questionnaire data showed that male final year undergraduates were more likely to expect to work as civil servants and less inclined to be teachers than their female peers. The following section tries to identify factors that have contributed to the gender differences in occupational expectations by using both the questionnaire and interview data. The data revealed that the gender differences in occupational expectations might be related to job preference differences between males and females. That is, males were inclined to highlight factors like pay, job reputation, promotion and even power; whilst females tended to be more concerned with job stability, work-life balance and pleasant working environment.

6.5.1 Findings from the questionnaire data

Through a series of Likert-items of job preferences (1=not at all important, and 5=very important) shown in Table 6.10, it suggests that female final year undergraduates were more likely to prioritize 'stable jobs', 'pleasant working environment' as well as 'balance family and work' and less inclined to highlight 'pay', 'promotion' and 'job reputation' than their male counterparts. Moreover, the first two items of females' job preferences were statistically different from those of their male counterparts ($P < 0.05$).

Table 6.10 Males' and female final year undergraduates' job preferences

Job values	Male		Female		T-test (P value)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Stable job	3.97	0.72	4.12	0.75	0.04*
Pleasant working environment	3.83	0.77	3.97	0.67	0.04*
Balance family and work	4.04	0.86	4.11	0.68	0.37
High salary	4.21	0.84	4.00	0.78	0.34
Promotion	4.03	0.77	3.97	0.74	0.39
Job reputation	3.76	0.82	3.67	0.79	0.26

Note: N=426 for the item 'Job reputation', N=427 for others.

*. Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This study further explores the gender differences in life role orientations, which could be illustrated by males' and females' viewpoints of how to deal with the relationship between family and work, of how they expect their prospective spouses to tackle the relationship between family and work and of how they regard who has the main responsibility for looking after the children.

When asked 'which factor is more important to you?', respondents could choose one from the following options: 'family', 'work', 'both family and work are important' and 'I do not know'. As shown in Table 6.11, a Chi-square test finds that the association between gender and the approaches of dealing with family and work was statistically significant. That is to say, firstly, although a majority of both males and females highlighted work-life balance, females were more likely to underline the item. Secondly, if respondents chose one from either 'work' or 'family', males were more concerned with 'work', whereas females were more inclined to choose 'family'.

Table 6.11 Cross tabulation of gender and work-life orientations

Work-life Orientations	Male	Female
Family	5.6 %	12.3 %
Work	23.1	2.3
Both	66.9	82.6
I don't know	4.4	2.7
Total	160	219
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=44.32, df=3, P=0.000$	

From another perspective, if we asked final year undergraduates' expectations on how their prospective spouses would deal with the relationship between family and work by using a question 'how would you expect your spouse to consider the relationship between family and work?', gender differences emerged again (see Table 6.12). A Chi-square test of the relationship between gender and how males and females expected their spouses to tackle the association between family and work finds a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. It shows that more than one-fourth (27.5%) of males expected their wives to put family first, compared with 5.9 per cent females expecting their husbands to do so. What is more, the majority of females (86.3%) expected their potential husbands to juggle work with family in comparison to roughly three-fifths (63.1%) of males expecting their future wives to balance work and family.

Table 6.12 Cross tabulation of gender and work-life orientations for their spouses

Work-life Orientations	Male	Female
Family	27.5%	5.9%
Work	2.5	3.2
Both	63.1	86.3
I don't know	6.9	4.6
Total	160	219
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=36.12, df=3, P=0.000$	

If childcare is added to examine gender differences in people's life-role orientations by asking the respondents 'who has the main responsibility to look after the children if you intend to have children?', interesting findings emerged. Males differed

considerably from females in terms of having the main responsibility of looking after the children (see Table 6.13). Only a small proportion of males would like to take the main responsibility of looking after the children, compared with roughly half of their female counterparts (48.3%). Meanwhile, approximately one-third of males expected their potential wives to have the main responsibility for looking after the children; by contrast, very few females expected their future husbands to play the main role in taking care of the children. This means that family affairs are still important for females, willingly or unwillingly (by their potential spouses' expectations), although they sometimes could find alternatives to help them look after their children, as discussed in the chapter two.

Table 6.13 Cross tabulation of gender and who has the main responsibility for looking after the children

Who to mainly look after the children	Male	Female
Myself	9.2%	48.3%
My spouse	33.3	2.4
Our parents	34.0	25.4
Nursery	1.3	5.9
I don't know	22.2	18.0
Total	153	205
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=1.36$, $df=4$, $P=0.000$	

In sum, the questionnaire data altogether showed that male final year undergraduates and their female peers had fairly gendered job preferences. In detail, firstly, in terms of jobs *per se*, males tended to focus on 'pay', 'job reputation' and 'promotion'; whilst their female peers highlighted 'stable jobs', 'pleasant working environment' as well as 'balance family and work'. Secondly, with regard to life role orientations, there was a higher likelihood for males to put work first and less likely to prefer family than their female counterparts. Females were also more likely to juggle family and work than their male peers, willingly or because of their potential husbands' expectations. Meanwhile, looking after children also differentiated females from males, since females would take the main responsibility for looking after the children,

by their own will or because of their prospective husbands' expectations. All these are quite in accordance with the mainstream gender roles of husband as the main breadwinner and wife as the main homemaker in China (Zuo and Bian, 2001).

6.5.2 Findings from the interview data

Overall, among the 26 interviewees, 7 females and 4 males expected to work in the 'Education' occupation; and 1 female and 4 males expected to work in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation. Reasons underpinning the interviewees' occupational expectations will be explored below.

6.5.2.1 Same choice-Education, different reasons

Although both males and females have chosen to work in the 'Education' occupation, they tended to have quite different reasons. Males expected to work in the occupation mainly because they wanted to pass on what they have learnt during their higher education, while females were more likely to focus on what the 'Education' occupation could offer them, for example, job stability, working environment and time to balance family and work.

Deng and Ke, as examples of the four male interviewees, provided their accounts of choosing the 'Education' occupation below:

I expect to be a History teacher mainly because I want to have good development in my own area which I have learnt for four years. (Deng, male, major in History)

I learn English, so I want to be an English teacher. Of course, I did expect to work in a foreign enterprise, but I found it a little bit challenging for me, because what I have learnt is not business English, which means I am not capable of doing things that require professional knowledge. (Ke, male, major in English)

So, we could find that the programmes studied largely shaped the male interviewees'

occupational expectations. Even they tried to broaden their occupational choices; the choices were still programme-directed.

While for their female peers, they had quite diverse reasons of choosing to be teachers, which could be demonstrated by the following quotations.

I choose to be a teacher because, I think, as a female, I need job stability. Jobs in educational areas are more stable than those in other occupations. (Zhou, female, major in Education)

I have chosen to be a teacher because I could have summer and winter vacations each year. Also, job stability is also my consideration. (Yu, female, major in Math and Applied Math)

As a teacher, I could enjoy vacations. I could do whatever I like during the vacations. Furthermore, I like the working environment in secondary schools. I like communicating with students and helping them to release their potentials. (Li, female, major in Biological Technology)

Working in the 'Education' occupation, I could have enough time to balance family and work. If I work in other occupations, it is predictable that my home would become messy. My future husband and child would complain about my irresponsibility of family affairs. (Peng, female, major in Information Technology)

The above quotations may suggest that the female interviewees' occupational expectations could be regarded as job-directed, which meant that when females made choices about their occupational expectations, they would consider what the prospective occupations could bring to them, such as, job stability, long vacations, working environment and work-family balance.

6.5.2.1 Same choice-Party Agencies and Social Organizations, different reasons

Very different reasons underpinned the 4 males' and one female's expectations of jobs in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation. In detail, males would like to highlight pay, job reputation, promotion and even power that could be offered by the jobs; whilst the only female argued that she preferred life quality, working environment and good relationship with her potential colleagues embedded

in the job.

For example, one male interviewee, Nie, underscored the potential benefits of getting a job in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’ occupation.

I will have good personal development in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’. It is not difficult to get a promotion, and as a civil servant, I can firstly build up my social network and then use it. (Nie, Male, major in Chinese)

His male peers described other benefits that the occupation could provide:

I think there are two occupations that allow making full use of males’ abilities. One is to be self-employed and open a business, the other is to work in the government. Therefore, I think jobs in the latter occupation have a quite good job reputation. What is more, as a country reigned by the CCP, which means that by working in politics I could get a decent salary and other social welfare, for example, house allowances or yearly bonuses. (Cheng, male, major in Chinese)

As you know, civil servants could offer visible and invisible salaries (mainly house allowances, bonuses) that concern me greatly. For example, as a civil servant, I could get some house allowances, you know, nowadays in China, purchasing a flat is very expensive, but that would be different for civil servants. (Xiang, male, major in Physics)

Therefore, it could be seen from the above quotations that those male interviewees saw the benefits of the occupation that might be centred on ‘work’, for example, decent pay, promotion, job reputation and even power (e.g., social network).

On the other hand, their female peer held quite different ideas of expecting to work in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’, and this is the female interviewee’s account.

Although the salary in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’ may be a little bit lower than that in foreign enterprises, life quality would be different. [Working in the occupation] will make my life very comfortable. The working environment is also pleasant, I will face less pressure [than I would encounter in other occupations]. Furthermore, I will have a good relationship with my colleagues. This is my dream; I will work hard for it. (Dong, female, major in Journalism, TV and Broadcasting)

In sum, the interview data further showed that males and females had quite different job preferences that might underpin their different occupational expectations. That is, males preferred jobs in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’ because they

could get decent pay, job reputation, promotion and even power from the occupation. By contrast, females put jobs in the 'Education' occupation firstly, because the occupation could provide them with job stability, pleasant working environment and could facilitate them to juggle work with family.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed gender differences in final year undergraduates' occupational expectations. The questionnaire data showed that generally males were more likely to expect to work in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' and less inclined to expect to work in the 'Education' occupation, which to some extent reflected that sex segregation still existed in China's graduate labour market. The questionnaire and interview data accounted for the gender differences in occupational expectations. Finally, the gendered job preferences have been identified as contributing to the gender differences in occupational expectations. In particular, males generally tended to highlight pay, job reputation, promotion and even power; while females prioritized stable jobs, pleasant working environment and work-life balance.

Chapter Seven: Gender Differences in Final Year Undergraduates' Working Region Expectations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations. Before addressing the issue, it firstly presents regional disparities and labour force mobility in China. It is followed by a presentation of Chinese university graduates' working region choices for their first jobs in 2008. Next, it addresses gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations. Finally, it works out factors that have actually contributed to the gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations.

7.2 Regional disparities and labour force mobility in China

7.2.1 China's policy responses on regional disparities

China has been an uneven country for many years, especially in terms of its economic development (Li, J. L., 2007; Li, J. W., 2007; Liu, 2007). However, from 1949 to 1978, the central government has dedicated to balancing regional development by adopting the so-called 'Balanced Developmental Strategy' (*junheng fazhan zhanlue*) to reduce regional disparities inherited from the old China (Li, J. W., 2007; Li and Tang, 2007). For instance, in the 1950s, the Mao Zedong leadership took a number of actions such as establishing separate regional industrial systems to balance regional disparities (Li, J. W., 2007). However, the strategy began to curb China's economic development in the late 1970s (Li and Tang, 2007), especially East China's economic development, since East China had a better infrastructure and industrial base than other regions (Zheng and Chen, 2007).

The central government therefore began to implement an ‘Unbalanced Developmental Strategy’ (*feijunheng fazhan zhanlue*) to prioritize East China (Song, Chu and Cao, 2000; Zheng and Chen, 2007). With the implementation of the ‘Reform and Open-door Policy’ in the late 1970s, firstly, in 1980, four Special Economic Zones located in east and coastal areas of China were launched (Gao, 2009; Liu, 2007). It was followed by 14 coastal cities that were listed as open cities (Gao, 2009; Zheng and Chen, 2007). Indeed, those policies have greatly resulted in the fast development of East China’s economy. However, regional disparities have widened. For example, according to Song, Chu and Cao (2000), in 1991, the per capita GDP in Shanghai (East China) was four times that of Anhui (Central China) and five times that of Guizhou (West China).

Therefore, to narrow regional gaps, the central government has launched a series of influential policies to pursue regional equality from the 1990s onwards. In 1999, the ‘Western Development Strategy’ (*xibu dakaifa zhanlue*) was proposed. At the end of 2000, the ‘Policies and Actions of Western China Development by the State Council of People’s Republic of China’ was officially published, indicating that the ‘Western Development Strategy’ was put into practice (Lu, S. Z., 2002). Then, in 2003, the central government published a report addressing the ‘Northeast Revival Strategy’ (*zhenxing dongbei zhanlue*). Meanwhile, the central government published a number of reports regarding how to revive the economy of Northeast China (Xinhuanet, 2003). One year later, the premier of China, Wen Jiabao, announced the ‘Rise of Central China Strategy’ (*zhongbu jueqi zhanlue*) in his report to the State Council of People’s Republic of China (Xinhuanet, 2006). Nowadays, one of the most important ideologies of the Chinese government is to build a ‘Harmonious Society’ (*hexie shehui*), which enormously highlights regional equality within China (Xinhuanet, 2005). What is more, narrowing regional gaps has been highlighted in the 11th Five-year Plan (2006-2010) (Zheng and Chen, 2007).

However, although a number of policies facilitating to reduce regional gaps have been put into practice, regional disparities still persist in contemporary China (Keidel, 2007; Zheng and Chen, 2007), which might result from a number of reasons. Firstly,

Chen and Zheng (2008, p. 31) argue that although regional development policies have to some extent reduced the regional gaps in China, due to the ‘distance effect and adverse production environments in some of the most remote provinces’, the central and western areas do not catch up with east areas. Another reason for the persisting regional discrepancies might be related to foreign trade. With the implementation of the ‘Open-door Policy’, more and more foreign trade and foreign direct investment have occurred. Studies find that foreign trade and foreign direct investment are more likely to happen in regions where getting access to foreign markets is easy (e.g., Ge, 2006). In China, East and coastal areas are more advantageous than others areas in attracting foreign trade and foreign direct investment, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

7.2.2 Snapshot of regional gap in contemporary China

The mainland of China (hereafter as China) has 31 provincial-level administrative units, four of which are ‘municipalities’: Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin. In this study, China has been grouped into four regions as provinces or municipalities in each region have similar economic conditions (Xiao and Zhou, 2006). The detailed classifications are as follows: 1) Northeast China, includes 3 provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning; 2) East China, which encompasses the following 10 provinces and municipalities: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shandong, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Hebei, Zhejiang, Hainan and Fujian; 3) Central China, consists of 6 provinces: Jiangxi, Henan, Anhui, Shanxi, Hubei and Hunan; and 4) West China, comprises 12 provinces and municipalities: Chongqing, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Guizhou, Yunnan, Gansu, Sichuan, Ningxia, Xizang, Guangxi, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

In order to obtain a snapshot of regional gaps in contemporary China, I employ a series of indicators that show how regions vary in China. Overall, the total population of urban and rural residents, regional GDP and per capita GDP, foreign direct investment, total income and disposable income and the number of regular

HEIs and universities listed in the ‘211 project’ have been used to represent a multifaceted snapshot of the regional gaps in contemporary China.

Firstly, in terms of the distribution of urban and rural residents in the four regions, as can be seen in Table 7.1, East China had a much higher proportion of urban population than others regions in China. Moreover, both Central and West China have a lower proportion of urban population than the average level in China.

Table 7.1 Total population by urban and rural residents, 2008

	Urban (proportion)	Rural (proportion)
Northeast China	56.22	43.78
East China	61.34	38.66
Central China	41.73	58.28
West China	38.48	61.52
National total	45.68	54.32

Source: China Statistics Yearbook, 2009 and author’s calculation

Secondly, Table 7.2 shows that disparities still exist within regions, both for regional GDP and for per capita GDP. In 2008, the GDP of East China was roughly 4 times that of West China, approximately 2 times that of Northeast China, and roughly 1.5 times that of Central China, respectively. With regard to the per capita GDP, East China was also leading China’s four regions.

Table 7.2 Regional GDP and per capita GDP, 2008

	GDP	Per capital GDP
Northeast China	9,398.54	25,929
East China	17,757.96	37,000
Central China	10,531.34	17,817
West China	4,854.72	15,950

Source: China Statistics Yearbook, 2009 and author’s calculation.

Note: Regional GDP in 100 million Yuan, and per capita GDP in Yuan.

Thirdly, regional gaps become even larger when it comes to regional foreign direct investment (see Table 7.3). East China has attracted much more foreign direct investment than other regions in China. Northeast, Central and West China were all

below the average level in China as a whole in terms of foreign direct investment.

Table 7.3 Regional foreign direct investment, 2008

	Foreign direct investment
Northeast China	528.04
East China	1,776.72
Central China	278.18
West China	133.04
National average	624

Source: China Statistics Yearbook, 2009 and author's calculation.

Note: Unit in 100 million US dollars.

Fourthly, with regard to total income and disposable income, regional gaps still persist. Both the total income and disposable income in East China were much more than those in China's other regions (see Table 7.4), which possibly made East China an ideal place to work and to live, since people there could gain a relatively higher salary than those in other regions.

Table 7.4 Per capita annual income of urban households by region, 2008

	Total income	Disposable income
Northeast China	13,902.11	12,934.47
East China	21,042.11	19,227.72
Central China	14,023.56	13,196.83
West China	13,701.97	12,741.78

Source: China Statistics Yearbook, 2009 and author's calculation.

Note: Unit in Yuan.

Finally, regional disparities not only exist in economic and related issues, but also extend to educational resources. As shown in Table 7.5, in 2008, the average number of regular HEIs in East China was more than that of both Northeast China and West China, though slightly less than that of Central China. However, with regard to the number of universities listed in the '211' project¹⁶, East China was once again advantaged.

¹⁶ 'Project 211' is the Chinese government's new endeavour aimed at strengthening about 100 institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the 21st century, see <http://www.edu.cn/20010101/21851.shtml>, viewed on 20th August, 2010.

Table 7.5: Regular HEIs and universities in the ‘211 Project’ list by region, 2008

	Number of regular HEIs	Number of universities in the ‘211’ project list
Northeast China	63.67	3.67
East China	76.9	5.9
Central China	80.17	2.83
West China	38.92	2.08

Source: Statistics of numbers of HEIs were extracted from *China Statistics Yearbook, 2009*, and Statistics of universities in the ‘211 Project’ list were from the website of The MOE. However, numbers in Table 7.5 are based on author’s calculation.

7.2.3 Labour force mobility in China

During China’s planning economy period between the 1950s and late the 1970s, labour mobility was not permitted, neither across cities nor across employers within a city (Cai, Du and Wang, 2009; Knight and Yueh, 2003). However, since the implementation of China’s ‘Reform and Open-door Policy’, its transition from a planned economy to a market economy and its accession to the World Trade Organization, labour mobility became possible and now it is very common for labour forces to move from one area to another (Bian, 2002; Cai, Du and Wang, 2009; Knight and Yueh, 2003; Wang, Cai and Gao, 2009).

Due to regional gaps among different areas in China, scholars find that relatively developed areas, especially East China, are the destinations of migrates while relatively poor Central and West China are the origins of those migrates (e.g., Cai and Du, 2000; Liu, 2010). In the course of China’s internal migration, rural people with low education and skills constitute the main part owing to China’s land reform in rural areas and urbanization (Cai, Du and Wang, 2009; Xiang, 2007).

However, nowadays, highly educated university graduates have also played an indispensable role in the cohort of the migration (Li, Sun and Fang, 2007; Zhang, 2007). As discussed in chapter two, with the evolution of China’s employment policy for university graduates, Chinese graduates nowadays are able to move from one region to another. Of course, university graduates still have to cross some hurdles to

move ‘freely’ to some relatively developed areas like Beijing and Shanghai, and one of which they have encountered is the notorious Chinese Hukou System that is defined as an ‘internal passport regulating and restricting population mobility’ (Chan and Buckingham, 2008, p. 587). There is evidence that the Hukou system has become less constrained in recent years (Chan and Buckingham, 2008).

Table 7.6 shows that it is quite common for university graduates to move from one region to another to get jobs. It is obvious that East China is the main destination for university graduates to flow to, such as, Guangdong, Beijing and Shanghai; whereas Central and West China are the origins for university graduates to flow out of, such as Chongqing and Gansu (West China), Hunan and Jiangxi (Central China).

Table 7.6 Regional flow of university graduates in China, 2008

Province or municipalities	Flow in rate (%)	Flow out rate (%)
Guangdong	155	4
Beijing	170	23
Shanghai	136	9
Zhejiang	65	10
Fujian	36	20
Yunnan	45	30
Shandong	31	17
Jiangsu	40	26
Inner-Mongolia	45	39
Tianjin	45	40
Guangxi	21	36
Liaoning	23	39
Sichuan	22	39
Shanxi	27	47
Guizhou	26	47
Chongqing	32	57
Henan	17	45
Gansu	19	48
Hebei	20	57
Anhui	10	49
Shaanxi	15	60
Jilin	10	63
Heilongjiang	6	60
Hubei	10	72
Hunan	8	70
Jiangxi	6	76

Source: Mycos, 2009.

Notes:

1. Flow in rate=the number of graduates studying in B province or municipality yet working in A province or municipality/ the number of graduates in A province or municipality
Flow out rate= the number of graduates studying in A province or municipality yet working in B province or municipality/ the number of graduates in A province or municipality.
2. Data for Tibet, Qinghai, Ningxia, Hainan and Xinjiang are not available.

7.3 Gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations

7.3.1 Working region choices for university graduates

It would be of considerable interest to compare the regional flow of the research respondents in this study with that of university graduates in China as a whole. As mentioned above, China has been an uneven country in terms of its socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, university students might have quite different regional choices for their first jobs. Figure 7.1 shows the working region choices of the first jobs for university graduates in 2008¹⁷.

¹⁷ In Figure 7.1, East china includes the following 11 provinces and municipalities: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shandong, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Hebei, Zhejiang, Hainan and Fujian, Liaoning; Central China contains 8 provinces: Jiangxi, Henan, Anhui, Shanxi, Hubei and Hunan, Heilongjiang and Jilin; and West China consists of 12 provinces and municipalities: Chongqing, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Guizhou, Yunnan, Gansu, Sichuan, Ningxia, Xizang, Guangxi, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

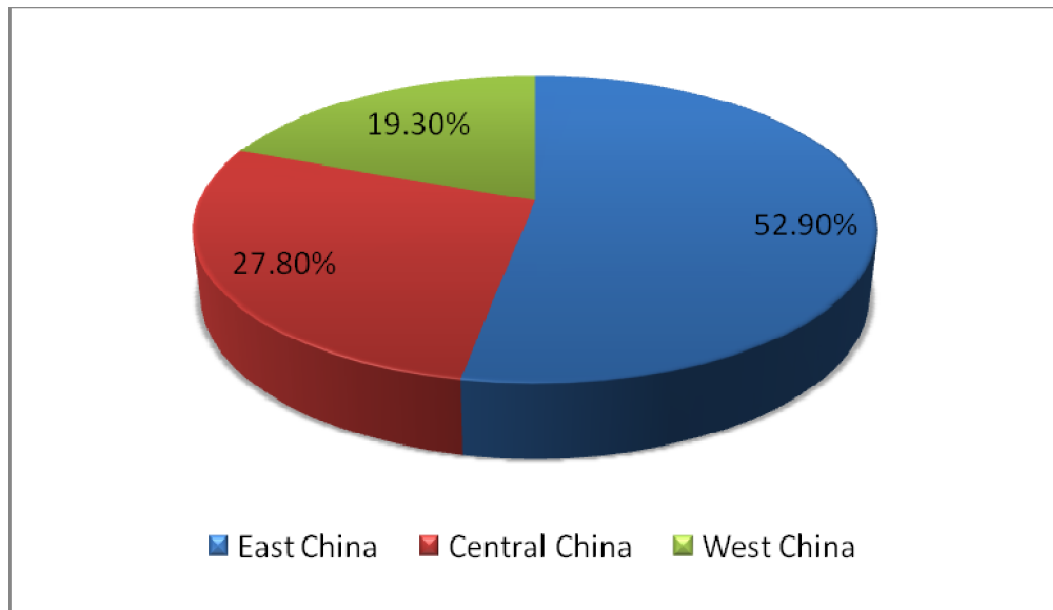


Figure 7.1 University graduates' working region choices in 2008

Source: The Centre of Information Consultation and Career Guidance for University Graduates in China (*Quanguo gaodeng xuexiao xuesheng xinxi zixun yu jiuye zhidao zhongxin*) and the Graduate School of Education, Peking University, 2009, p. 43.

Based on Figure 7.1, it is easy to recognize that university graduates were more likely to flood into developed areas in East China, followed by less developed areas in Central and West China. Nevertheless, this survey did not contain information about gender with respect to university graduates' working region choices for their first jobs.

7.3.2 Gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations in the study

Firstly, final year undergraduates' working region expectations were grouped into four big economic regions based on Xiao and Zhou's (2006) classification of China's geographical provinces and municipalities. As shown in Table 7.7, males and females behaved differently in their working region expectations. Male final year undergraduates expected to work in East China most, followed by Central China; while their female counterparts preferred Central China to East China. Additionally,

very few final year undergraduates expected to work in Northeast and West China. What is more, a Chi-square test showed that there was significant association between gender and working region expectations ($p < 0.05$).

Comparing final year undergraduates' working region expectations with university graduates' actual working region choices in 2008, it revealed that male final year undergraduates' working regions choices were, to a substantial extent, in line with the actual working region choices of university graduates in 2008 in that they both took East China as their first choices for the starting jobs. However, that was not the case for their female counterparts, since females would rather prioritize Central China¹⁸.

Table 7.7 Cross tabulation of final year undergraduates' working region expectations by gender

Expected working regions	Male	Female
Northeast China	10.4 %	2.9 %
East China	51.1	36.2
Central China	31.3	54.1
West China	7.2	6.8
Total	N=182	N=233
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=8.7$, $df=3$, $P=0.03$	

When I compared final year undergraduates' working region expectations with their places of origin, I found that male final year undergraduates' working region expectations, to a great extent, were not consistent with their places of origin. By contrast, their female peers' working region expectations were quite in accordance with their places of origin (see Table 7.8). Furthermore, statistics showed that there was a significant association between gender and the relationship (measured by consistency or inconsistency) between final year undergraduates' working region expectations and their places of origin ($P < 0.05$). From another perspective, male final year undergraduates were more likely to engage in geographical mobility than their female counterparts.

¹⁸ The classification in the Figure 7.2 is slightly different from that in the present study in that there is no 'Northeast China' in the former one, rather, one developed province in Northeast China-Liaoning has been grouped into 'East China' and two less developed provinces in the region-Heilongjiang and Jilin have been grouped into 'Central China'.

Table 7.8 Cross tabulation of the comparison between final year undergraduates' working region expectations and their places of origin by gender

	Male	Female
Consistency	43.9%	59.5%
Inconsistency	56.1	40.5
Total	N=164	N=224
Chi-square test	$\chi^2=8.07$, $df=1$, $P=0.005$	

7.4 Factors affecting gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations

Interviewees were asked in which region they would like to work for their first jobs and for what reasons. The interviewees were also asked to report their parents' expectations for their working regions. Among the 13 male interviewees, nine expected to work in East China, two in Central China, one in Northeast China, and one in West China. Of the thirteen female interviewees, six expected to work in Central China, four in East China, two in West China and one in Northeast China. It was found that the working region expectations of the 13 male interviewees were not very much in line with those of the male participants for the questionnaire survey. However, the interview data showed that males preferred East China whilst female prioritized Central China for their working region expectations, which was quite consistent with the findings from the questionnaire survey (see Table 7.7, p. 146).

The following section will not give equal treatment to the final year undergraduates' various working region expectations, rather, special attention will be paid to the following two issues: 1) why male final year undergraduates preferred East China whilst their female peers highlighted Central China; and 2) why females were more likely to expect to work near their homes than their male peers.

7.4.1 The gendered orientations

The interview data revealed gendered orientations led to the gender differences in working region expectations. That is, males preferred to work in East China because they focused on work-related issues, such as work opportunities and higher salaries, while females were more inclined to work in Central China because they had strong family ties.

On one hand, economic condition has been regarded as an important factor affecting final year undergraduates' regional choices (He, 2006; Li, Sun and Fang, 2007; Zeng, 2007; Zhang, 2007). As discussed before, the economic condition in East China is much better than that in other areas in China, which could consequently attract more university graduates to flood into the region (He, 2006; Li, Sun and Fang, 2007; Zeng, 2007; Zhang, 2007). A good economic condition is, more often than not, in line with a decent salary, to which male final year undergraduates have paid special attention. Actually, quite a number of male interviewees confirmed the argument.

I intend to work in East China because I think; economic development in East China appears to be much better than that in other areas in China. So there are more job vacancies in East China (Zhu, male, place of origin: West China).

I choose to work in East China owing to two reasons. First, economic conditions are better than other regions in China. Then, the salary in East China is higher than that in other areas (Nie, male, place of origin: Central China).

There are at least two reasons that have made me to work in East China. To begin with, there is a big gap between East China and other regions in China, not only in economic area, but also beyond. Then, teachers' salaries are much higher than other regions (Ke, male, place of origin: Central China).

When these male interviewees further explored why they highlighted work opportunities or high salaries, their answers were that they had to support the prospective family financially. In order to be prepared for properly playing the breadwinner role, they had to go to developed areas of East China where salary would be higher than less developed areas.

On the other hand, all the six females expressed that the main reason for them expecting to work in Central China was that it was close to their homes. Female final year undergraduates, although well educated, still desired to be closely attached with their parents when they experienced a transition from universities to the labour market. For example, Wei said:

The first choice for me is to go back to C city, Central China, where my parents live, since I am the one kid in my family. (Wei, female, place of origin: Central China)

This argument has been echoed by the other five females. Below were two examples.

I mainly want to stay in A, Central China, the fundamental reason is that if I go to another region, it will not be convenient to go back home, because I am from A. (Yang, female, place of origin: Central China)

I mainly want to go home, because my parents will be worried if I go to an unfamiliar city. (Peng, female, place of origin: Central China)

The abovementioned evidence might suggest that due to gendered orientations, with males focusing on ‘work’ related issues and females prioritizing family ties, males tended to have quite different preferences of working region expectations from those of their female peers.

7.4.2 The impact of parents’ expectations

The interview data showed that 6 male interviewees’ parents expected their sons to work as close to their homes as possible, compared with 11 for their female peers. However, comparing final year undergraduates’ working region expectations with their parents’ expectations, it suggested that the majority of male interviewees’ (4 out of 6) working region expectations were not in line with their parents’ expectations. By contrast, a large proportion of females (8/11) conformed to their parents’ expectations in terms of where to work for the first jobs.

For males, although their parents expected them to work near home, however, they had their own ideas, which were different from their parents. Shi’s story showed how

males could disagree with their parents' expectations.

Shi, male, major in Biological Technology, when asked if his parents had any expectations for his first job, He replied:

My parents did not expect too much about what I should do and how much I should earn. However, they only expected that I should work near my place of origin. In detail, I am from X city, West China, so I cannot find a job in G city, South China, because it is too far from my place of origin, since I am the only son in my family. (Shi, male, major in Biological Technology, place of origin: West China)

It showed that the parents did expect their son to work near their home, and the child understood his parents' intentions. However, when asked where he intended to work, he began to show his disagreement with his parents.

Q: Why did you choose H city, East China?

A: Because there will be more job opportunities, albeit more pressures as well. It is widely noticed that many graduates have flooded into East China, but I think there are still many job vacancies, which is not the case for poor or undeveloped areas where you cannot get so many chances. I am sure one could get a chance as long as he/she is interested in working in East China.

Q: I just wonder whether or not your parents will agree with you?

A: I feel my parents [a long pause]. They might not be happy at the very beginning, but if I intended to find a job in East China, they would not stop me.

Q: Will they support you?

A: I think it mostly depends on my own decision. If they think the job is suitable for me, it will be fine. Although they are a little bit reluctant to accept that I will work in East China, they will not prevent me from working there. (Shi, male, major in Biological Technology, place of origin: West China)

Sons' independence of their parents' ideas could also be seen from Hu's case. Hu reported:

Although my parents have very high expectations on my job, they however respect my own decisions. So after my university education, I could have my own judgement on some crucial issues. For example, now I have to make an important decision, between continuing my education as a postgraduate and stopping my education and entering the labour market. (Hu, male, major at Communication Engineering, place of origin: Central China)

When asked if his parents had any expectations for where he should work, he replied:

My parents did expect me to work near home. Nevertheless, they also want me go to

some developed areas and to pursue my own career, since I am from a quite remote and undeveloped area and they know it would not be good for my personal development if they force me to stay near my home. Therefore, I could go to the outside world, East China for example, and try to realize my dream of having my own career. (Hu, male, major at Communication Engineering, place of origin: Central China).

These two cases may suggest that, as males, Shi and Hu could use their own judgement towards some crucial issues (e.g., where to work for their first jobs) that were important for their career; sometimes they were even encouraged by their parents (for Hu). In addition, their parents could compromise when facing conflicts between their own views and their sons' ideas as long as the results would be beneficial to their sons' personal development.

On the other hand, the majority of females (8 out of 11) showed that they were in favour of their parents' expectations in terms of where to work for the first jobs. For example, the quotations below were extracted from Yang's case.

Q: Did your parents have any expectation for your job?

A: Yes. My hometown is a small city, just one and a half hours' trip by coach to B, the capital city of A province, Central China. So, my parents would like me to find a job there. (Yang, female, major in History, place of origin: Central China)

Here, it showed that Yang's parents had expectations regarding where she should work, which was B, near her place of origin. Then, when asked where she expected to work for the first job, her choice was quite the same as where her parents expected her to work.

Q: Why did you choose to work in B city, Central China?

A: Mainly B city.

Q: What about other cities?

A: I have never thought about other cities.

Q: Why B?

A: First and foremost, it is quite near my place of origin... I do not want to go out because I do not want to stay far from my parents. Then, I have never thought to go out of A, Central China. (Yang, female, major in History, place of origin: Central China)

If Yang's case could be depicted as she has been directly affected by her parents' expectations in terms of where to work for her starting job, then, Zhou's case might

be better described as parents' expectations had an indirect impact on their daughter's working region expectations. For example, Zhou noted:

I expect to work in West China because I want to go home, although my parents have not explicitly said where I should work, they however, have done some preparations for my job. For example, they expected me to find a stable job and know that jobs like the civil service were very stable. Therefore, they helped me to obtain some information about the examination of civil servants in my province, and also consulted with some of their friends who had been civil servants for years. In this case, I do not have any choice but go back home. (Zhou, female, major in Education, place of origin: West China)

Parents' expectations seemed to exert different influences to their children's working region expectations for the first jobs. For males, they could argue with their parents' expectations. However, their female peers tended to be submissive to their parents' expectations. This quite diverse impact of parents' expectations may account for the fact that there was a higher likelihood for females to expect to find a job near their homes than their male counterparts.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dedicated to addressing gender differences in final year undergraduates' working region expectations. The questionnaire data showed that male final year undergraduates and their female counterparts behaved differently in terms of working region expectations. Firstly, males tended to put East China first, while their female peers highlighted Central China. What is more, there was a higher likelihood for females to work near their places of origin than their male counterparts. The interview data suggested that gendered orientations might account for males' inclination of East China and females' preferences of Central China; and the impact of parents' expectations might contribute to the fact that females were more likely to expect to work near their places of origin than their male peers.

The research data also show that more (if not all) young men seem to have embraced the idea of geographical mobility. For young women, because of their attachment to family, the idea of moving to an unknown region is less appealing. However, this may affect their future earning potential, since East China has a more developed economy than other areas in China.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Having presented the research findings in the previous three chapters (chapters five, six and seven), this chapter aims to provide a discussion and conclusion of the present study. It begins with a summary of the research findings and then discusses four key themes emerging from the empirical data. These are followed by some implications. After that, it identifies the limitations of the present study, and points out directions for further research.

8.2 Summary and discussion of the findings

8.2.1 Summary of the findings

The research questions asked in this study are:

- 1) Are there any gender differences in the employment expectations of male and female final year undergraduates?
- 2) If so, what factors have actually contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations?

With the research questions in mind, the study has been placed in the context of China where there is an ambivalent situation for gender equality in the labour market. That is to say, on the one hand, in terms of the total enrolment of university students, gender equality has almost been achieved (see chapter two), and the national policy

for university graduates has also facilitated male and female graduates to ‘freely’ choose their starting jobs in China’s graduate labour market. However, on the other hand, women university graduates have not been treated equally with their male counterparts in the labour market, and women still suffer from a motherhood penalty and take the main responsibility of looking after their children. What is more, the gender ideology in China put women in a disadvantageous position. Although the Chinese government has continuously dedicated to addressing gender equality in the labour market, however, there has been a lack of a focus on changing culture and attitudes.

A thorough review of the existing literature regarding gender differences in the labour market and in employment expectations led to the employment of ‘choice and constraint’ as the conceptual framework. This guided the methodology, the questionnaire design and interview schedule formulation. The study employed a mixed methods sequential study as the research design, using an on-site self-completion questionnaire survey and a follow-up semi-structured interview. The main findings from the study are:

- In terms of salary expectations, female final year undergraduates generally had lower salary expectations than their male counterparts. What is more, the differences of salary expectations between females and males were statistically significant.
- While for occupational expectations, both males and their female counterparts had various occupational expectations, with the preference of jobs in the ‘Education’ and ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’ occupations. However, males were more likely to expect to work in the ‘Party Agencies and Social Organizations’ occupation and less inclined to expect to work in the ‘Education’ occupation than their female cohorts.
- With respect to working region expectations, male final year undergraduates and their female peers behaved differently. The questionnaire data reported that males tended to put developed East China first; while their female peers highlighted Central China. What is more, there was a higher likelihood for females to work near their places of origin than their male peers.

- The empirical data showed that: 1) economic roles being played in the family by husband and wife largely shaped the gender differences in salary expectations; meanwhile, the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in China's labour market also affected the gender differences in final year undergraduates' salary expectations; 2) the gender differences in occupational expectations appeared to be related to job preference differences between the genders, and 3) parents' expectations and the gendered orientations seemed to contribute to the gender differences in working region expectations.

8.2.2 Discussion of the findings

This section discusses the key themes emerging from the data, rather than a discussion of all the findings. Echoing the conceptual framework 'choice and constraint' in the study, the section frames the discussion of the research findings through the choice and constraint lens. As mentioned earlier, employment expectations are also a sort of choice making, however, the choices are not genuinely free; rather, they are conditioned by particular constraints which function at both the societal and the individual level. It is worth noting that a particular choice is framed by a corresponding constraint. Thus, in the study, constraints imposing on salary expectations might be different from those on occupational expectations and on working region expectations, although they are sometimes interwoven.

As presented in the research finding chapters, gender differences in salary expectations might be related to two issues: different economic roles being played in the family between the genders and the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in the labour market, which could be regarded as two constraints functioning at the societal level. Then, in respect of gender differences in occupational expectations, this study finds that the gender differences could be traced back to a constraint that functions at the individual level - the different job preferences between male and

female final year undergraduates; however, they are affected by the extra-individual factors to some extent. Finally, gender differences also existed in working region expectations, which could be partly attributed to a constraint that functions at the societal level - parents' expectations. The following section will discuss these constraints in turn.

8.2.2.1 Different economic roles being played in a family between the genders

Data in the study showed that both males and females contended that males should play the main role in supporting the family financially, and females could also work, but their economic role was supplementary. China has undergone dramatic changes in the past few decades, but why do university students, a well-educated group, still have such an idea? This question will be answered from the following three points: traditional gender norms, modern gender views and China's cultural revivalism.

Firstly, traditional gender norms - *nanzhuwai nuzhunei* (men are responsible for economic affairs and women for domestic work and childcare) has had a persistent impact on people's minds even in current China (Bai and Wang, 2009). *Nei and wai* (*inside and outside*), originally as a ritual boundary, has actually acted as a mechanism to define the arena played in by men and women, which is that women are confined to the familial realm, for example, domestic work; and men are assigned to work outside their homes (Rosenlee, 2006). Therefore, as argued by Yuan (2005, p. 17), 'the division of labour between the inner (domestic) and the outer (public) spheres of responsibility makes it necessary for a wife to play a major role at home'. Also, the Chinese society expects women to mainly play their family roles as a mother and wife and women are therefore less likely to be expected to properly play their social roles in the public areas (Zhang, 2005). Therefore, given that China is still a patriarchal society (Guo and Yang, 2008), most if not all Chinese men are socialized to take the breadwinner role in a family; therefore, it is not surprising that men begin to take the breadwinner role even before a family is established. A good

example is the interviewee-Xiang, who said that he expected to earn 3,000 RMB monthly, so that he could purchase a flat in his 30s. Therefore, he thought he needed to prepare for the first instalment of the flat from his starting job onwards. He also reported that he could not rely on his future wife in purchasing a flat; rather, it was his main responsibility to purchase a flat in the non-distant future.

Secondly, as discussed in the background chapter, modern gender views - Marxism, Maoism, Deng's gender ideas and the equal opportunity model - have not succeeded in achieving gender equality in China. Although those views have been dedicated to addressing gender equality in China, they, however, have not paid special attention to women's issues. Rather, they have tended to prioritise other issues, particularly economic development, over women's development (Woo, 1994). Li (1995, p. 409) has argued that 'the official ideology in China has treated gender equality as [an] instrument of political solidarity, and women as instruments for enhancing the national GNP'. As a result, gender inequality still widely exists in China (World Bank, 2002), for example, in the labour market, as discussed in the background chapter. Gender inequality also permeates into the domestic area, with assumptions that women will bear the heavy housework burden and have less power in decision-making in important issues (Xu, 2006). These gendered differences both in the public and private areas have further reinforced the traditional gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, which might result in male and female university students complying with these societal expectations (Bu and McKeen, 2001; Zhou, Dawson and Herr, 2004), as shown in chapter three.

Finally, Chinese cultural revivalism may also contribute to the persistence of traditional gender roles. 'cultural revivalism', a term proposed by McLaren (1998, p. 195), stresses that there is 'an essential national character and the importance of traditional, cultural, family and ritual issues' (McLaren, 1998, p. 195-196). McLaren (1998) argued that with the influence of global capital and communication technology, the Chinese government is trying to advocate for a new women who is both modern and confucianised, carrying the Chinese culture, thus, she should not be Western in nature.

With the influence of China's cultural revivalism, women have been expected to act as the 'main carriers of a reconstituted "tradition" based on a combination of Chinese radical theory and Confucianism' (McLaren, 1998, p. 214). Therefore, it is apparent that some traditional gender norms closely linked with Confucianism have been revived, such as men mainly working outside and women mainly doing housework. For example, a study of 2,200 families in two cities in China (Shanghai in developed East China and Lanzhou in less developed West China) shows that Chinese people still have quite traditional gender roles in the family in the 21st century (Xu, 2010). In detail, Xu finds that in terms of the statement 'it is a good arrangement for men's breadwinner role and women's homemaker role', 44% men and 38% women in Shanghai agreed with it, while the comparable percentages for their peers in Lanzhou were 63% for men and 59% for women. With respect to another statement 'husbands should mainly play the breadwinner role and wives should mainly play the homemaker role, even though the wife has a job', again, still quite a large proportion of both men (39% in Shanghai and 60% in Lanzhou) and women (34% in Shanghai and 55% in Lanzhou) agreed with the statement. What is more, longitudinal data show that Chinese people were more likely to accept the statement 'men mainly work outside whilst women mainly do housework' in 2000 than in 1990 (Tao and Jiang, 1993; Ma, 2004).

China's cultural revivalism might result from a number of reasons, according to Xu (2010). Firstly, the economic transition has resulted in women's less favourable position in the labour market than their male counterparts, with a lower labour force participation rate, lower salaries and more discrimination against themselves. Secondly, with the establishment of China's market economy, working pressure has also increased. Under the circumstances, it tends to be regarded as more reasonable if men focus on work and women prioritize family. Finally, the mass media has also pushed the revival of the traditional gender roles in a family.

When it comes to university students, scholars find that both male and female university students still support the traditional family role division, that is, males

should play the main role in financially supporting a family and females should be the homemaker (e.g., Luo and Feng, 2001; Pan, 2001). For example, Pan (2001) reported that when talking about the criteria of choosing a spouse, 86 per cent of female university students believed that their potential husband should make an achievement in his career; meanwhile, almost two-thirds of them (62%) expected themselves to be a virtuous wife and good mother (*xianqi liangmu*). These various data in this section jointly indicate that the traditional gendered family roles have still been widely accepted in current China. So it is not surprising that in the present study, female final year undergraduates are more concerned about family affairs and less focused on work than their male peers.

8.2.2.2 Sex discrimination in China's labour market

The data in the study showed that both male final year undergraduates and their female cohorts have experienced or perceived sex discrimination in China's labour market, which resulted in female final year undergraduates' disadvantageous position. As a result, female final year undergraduates tended to lower their salary expectations in order to get employed, which further led to the gender gap in salary expectations.

Actually, sex discrimination has long existed in China's labour market (Cooke 2001 and 2005; Leung 2003), in terms of recruitment, promotion and retirement (Cooke 2001 and 2005). However, this study will focus on sex discrimination at the career entry as this is more relevant since I have been studying the employment expectations of final year undergraduates for their first jobs.

The findings of this study are consistent with other research in China. For instance, Li and Li (2008) found that in the past ten years, sex discrimination in the labour market has become an important reason in producing the gender earnings gap in China. What is more, as discussed in the background chapter, gender equality has

almost been achieved in China's higher education, However, women university graduates have not been treated equally with their male peers in the labour market (Xu and Bu, 2007; Zheng and Han, 2010). Evidence of unequal treatment has been widely found in China's graduate labour market. Firstly, male university graduates generally have had a higher employment rate than their female peers in recent years (The Centre of Information Consultation and Career Guidance for University Graduates in China (*Quanguo Gaodeng xuexiao xinxi zixun yu jiuye zhidao zhongxin*) and the Graduate School of Education, Peking University, 2009), although the gender differences in the employment rate are not massive. Secondly, Wang (2002) found that in terms of job hunting, female university graduates have to submit more CVs and spend more time applying for jobs, but they are less likely to successfully get a job than their male peers. She also reported that sex discrimination even exists in governmental organizations; this finding is in tandem with other studies (e.g., United Nation Development Programme, 1997). In Wang's study, one interviewee said 'take the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for example, at the first stage, the number of male students is the same as that of their female peers with regard to attending a job examination. However, no female applicant has got a chance to attend an interview at the second stage. You know, females normally have a better academic record than their male counterparts' (p. 15).

Alongside making more efforts yet getting less job opportunities, sex discrimination in the graduate labour market can also be illustrated by the starting salaries that male and female final year undergraduates have actually got. Statistics show that in 2008 male university graduates got 2,249 RMB each month six months after their graduation, compared with 1,988 RMB for their female peers (Mycos, 2009).

There are a number of reasons for sex discrimination in China's labour market. To begin with, some traditional norms valuing men and undervaluing women still

prevail in contemporary China (Kitching, 2001). As argued by Cooke (2001, p. 39), 'China is a country of traditional values in which the ideology of male superiority still prevails in all aspects of life'. As a result, quite a number of employers have male employee preferences. For instance, Woodham, Lupton and Xian (2009) found that in their study, more than half of job advertisements (55.5 %) that have specified the sex of job applicants requires male applicants.

The second reason is very much related to legislation that could be crystallized by the follow three points. Firstly, there is not a law that specially focuses on avoiding sex discrimination in China (Chen, 2003). Hence, sex discrimination has been mentioned only in laws such as the Constitution of China and the Labour Law, which, however, have had a series of drawbacks. For example, existing laws tend to regulate women's rights and interests during their pregnancy, maternity leave and childrearing, but they lack regulations pertaining to the recruitment, promotion and retirement of women employees (Chen, 2003). Secondly, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms that regulate how to avoid sex discrimination or to monitor or punish sex discrimination (Cooke, 2001; Fu, 2009; Zheng and Han, 2010). Indeed, China published a set of laws protecting women's rights, for example, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women (1992) states that implementing gender equality is China's basic state policy, and China has to take actions to eliminate discrimination against women (ADB, 2006). However, there is lack of enforcement mechanisms (Cooke, 2001, Nolan, 2009). One reason might be that there is little information about how the law should be implemented (Burda, 2007). While Cooke (2001, p. 345) further argues that 'in terms of sex discrimination in recruitment, the employment organizations are not monitored or sanctioned by any authority to filter out any illegal aspects of their recruitment process'. And finally, low levels of awareness of regulations by both employers and employees also contribute to women's subordinate position in China's labour market (Cooke, 2005).

Thus, employers do not know how to use laws and regulations to resolve disputes regarding employment and employees are not able to seek help from a variety of laws and regulations that could protect their rights and interests (Cooke, 2005). Wang (2002) also argues that Chinese university graduates' awareness of gender equality is somewhat weak. For example, in her study, she finds that when viewing the issue 'employers could use sex and age as reasons to restrict employees' potential job opportunities when the employment situation is not good', almost half of both male (47 %) and female (41.5%) respondents agreed with the statement.

A final reason for sex discrimination in China's labour market is the impact of labour market reforms (Fan, 2003). Firstly, the economic transformations had made a huge number of redundancies, most of which are women workers (Liu, 2007). Meng (1995) shows that up to 60 per cent of workers who lost their jobs were women in a seven-province survey carried out by the National Trade Union. Secondly, alongside the labour market reforms, China's social welfare reforms have also undergone a rapid change. In detail, in the past, the state-owned enterprises mainly shoulder the burden of peoples' social welfare, such as house benefits, medical care and pensions (Cooke, 2001). However, now the responsibility of sharing social welfare has been shifted to the employee, the employer and the insurance company (Croll, 1999).

Therefore, as argued by Nolan (2009), the more young women the employer has, the greater the cost of childbearing and child care that the employer has to bear. One would argue that compared with women in the West, Chinese women are lucky in that they tend to have fewer children and could have some help from their parents (even other relatives) looking after the children, however, as shown in the background chapter, Chinese women still have the main responsibility of looking after the children (Granrose, Chow and Chew, 2005; Hughes and Maurer-Fazio, 2002). Additionally, due to the poor implementation of some laws and regulations

(e.g., the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women (1992)) that could theoretically protect women's rights during their maternity leave (Woo, 1994); Chinese women workers still cannot eschew the penalty of childbearing. As a result, the employer may refuse some women job applicants and turn to recruiting men instead.

8.2.2.3 Various job preferences between men and women

The questionnaire data showed that both male final year undergraduates and their female peers had a quite wide range of occupational expectations, and the top two desirable occupations were 'Education' and 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations'. The main gender differences in occupational expectations were that male final year undergraduates were more likely to expect to work in the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' and less inclined to work in the 'Education' occupation than their female counterparts. The empirical data revealed that this might be related to their different job preferences. That is to say, male final year undergraduates were more likely to highlight pay, job reputation, promotion and even power; whereas their female peers were more concerned with work-life balance, job stability and pleasant working environment.

On the one hand, male final year undergraduates were more likely to highlight pay, job reputation, promotion and even power, which will be discussed in turn. Firstly, as discussed earlier in the chapter, Chinese men highlight pay because they assume that they will be the main breadwinner in the family, which is consistent with a number of existing studies (e.g., Bigoness, 1988; Konrad *et al.*, 2000) for highlighting men's roles of supporting the family financially. In China, the pay of civil servants normally consists of visible and invisible earnings. Visible earnings refer to salaries the employee gets each month, which are also the basic salaries; while invisible earnings

have quite a wide range of components, for example, allowances, bonuses, or other social welfare (Burn, 2003; Ren, 2002). In China, the basic salaries of civil servants are at a medium level, but being a civil servant brings social welfare which does not apply to many other jobs (Sun and Shen, 2007; Xu, 2008). What is more, as regulated by the Civil Servant Law of People's Republic of China, civil servants can enjoy house and medical allowances and even a bonus at the end of each year (Xinhuanet, 2010c). Therefore, civil servants are well paid in China, and can get much higher earnings than many other occupations could offer, for example, 'Education' (Ren, 2002).

Secondly, being a civil servant also has very high social status (Xu, 2008), which produces a good job reputation. It has been argued that males are more likely to associate with power than females (Crawford and Unger, 2004, P.78, quoted in Cohen, Benger and Zeldith, 1972; Unger, 1976 and 1978). As argued by Pratto and Walker (2004), power could be examined by the four bases: force, resource control, consensual ideologies and asymmetric social obligations. In this study, I will focus on examining one expression of power in relation to gender equality: resource control, as it is the most relevant. One of the most important resources in China is the political resource which is firmly linked with the civil service, and are where women have had an unfavourable status (World Bank, 2002), as discussed in chapter six. It is also argued that civil servants would bring power that has been regarded as a kind of public resource in China (Sun and Shen, 2007), which could be used for their personal development, for example, promotion (Sun and Shen, 2007). As reported, the bureaucracy-oriented ideology is also rooted in quite a large number of university students', especially male students' hearts (Sun and Shen, 2007; Xu, 2007; Yang, 2009). Therefore, they are trying to make good use of this power for their promotion to a senior level. Given that men have been in a favourable position in China's political arena for a long time (Guo and Zheng, 2008), therefore, males, rather than females, are encouraged to enter the political field, consciously or unconsciously.

On the other hand, female university students were more likely to underline work-life

balance, job stability and working environment. This finding is in line with other studies. Firstly, in terms of balancing family and work, Konrad *et al.* (2000) find that women are more concerned with factors related to homemaking. Studies carried out in China also confirm the argument that the work-life balance is more important to female employees as they are expected to be the main homemaker and child carer (e.g., Nielsen and Smyth, 2008), which is the case for both women in general and highly educated female university graduates in particular. For the whole female group, a survey shows that women generally spend three and a half hours on house chores each day, compared with one and a half hours for men (Ma, 2004). Studies also find that highly educated women also need to take the main role for home responsibilities (e.g., Zhang and Fraley, 1995). From another angle, teachers in China can enjoy very long summer and winter vacations each year, regulated by the Teachers Law of People's Republic of China (MOE, 2010c). Also, they could have other public holidays, for example, the National Day (from 1st October, for one week). Therefore, long vacations would facilitate females to balance family and work.

Secondly, job stability is another characteristic of teaching in China (Xiao, 2006). As most schools in China are public, once an employee gets a job in those schools, s/he would be working there for a long time and could not be sacked easily by the government¹⁹. Besides, the recent world economic crisis has had a big impact on China's labour market (Sziraczki, Huynh and Kapsos, 2009). Therefore, some university students, especially female students, would choose stable jobs, rather than taking risks of being sacked shortly after getting a job. A survey shows that jobs in the 'Education' occupation are the least affected by the world economic crisis beginning in 2008 (Zuo, 2009), which verifies the job stability of being a teacher from another perspective.

Finally, with regard to working environment, studies reveal that women give high ratings to social factors of a job such as meeting and speaking with others and

¹⁹ According to the Educational Statistics Yearbook of China 2008, there were more than 0.52 million public schools in China, while the comparable number of private schools was around 0.1 million.

helping others (e.g., Robinson and Beutell, 2004). Quite a number of female interviewees also emphasized this point. For instance, one female interviewee studying the Biological Technology programme reported that one of the most important reasons for her to expect to be a secondary school teacher was that she liked the environment, which helped her to communicate with students, sharing her own experiences with students.

8.2.2.4 The impact of parents' expectations on their children's working region expectations

The questionnaire data revealed that female final year undergraduates were more likely to work in a region that was close to their homes than their male peers. Data from the interviews indicated that this might be related to parents' expectations. In detail, the majority (11 out of 13) of female interviewees reported that their parents expected them to work near their homes, but less than half (6 out of 13) of the male interviewees reported so. Facing parents' expectations, female final year undergraduates and their male peers tended to behave differently. Females were inclined to obey their parents' ideas, which meant that parents' expectations could largely determine their daughters' working region expectations. Whilst for their male peers, although some parents did expect their sons to work near their homes, they also expected their sons to do well in their career. Therefore, male final year undergraduates could sometimes disagree with their parents' expectations in terms of where to work for their first jobs. To account for the phenomenon, it is necessary to introduce the concept of filial piety that has long existed in China.

According to the Confucian teaching of filial piety (*xiao*), young people are expected to be respectful, obedient to, and take care of, elders (Ho, 1994; Sun, 1995). 'Filial piety has served as a guiding principle for patterns of Chinese socialization and intergenerational communication for thousands of years' (Yue and Hg, 1999, p. 215).

Wang and Hsueh (2000, p. 61) further argue that:

In traditional Chinese families, absolute obedience and subservience to their parents were required from children, whose life course, including education, marriage, occupation and even daily life, were subject to parents' wishes.

However, with the rapid transformation of China's socioeconomic conditions in the past few decades, some of the traditional norms of filial piety have been undermined to a substantial extent (Yue and Hg, 1999). For example, studies find that some core filial obligations (e.g., support the elders financially) have been valued continuously while others, such as absolute obedience, has lost support from young people (Ho, 1996). Ironically, alongside the fact that young people give up absolute obedience to the elders, they have still been strongly affected by their parents (Ho, 1996).

At the same time, during the rapid economic growth in the past three decades, the parent-child relationships in the Chinese families have shifted from a focus on material reciprocity to an emphasis on psychological interdependence (Wang and Hsueh, 2000). Meanwhile, China's economic reform began almost the same time as the implementation of the one-child policy. According to Deutsch (2006), the policy may result in a closer emotional tie between parents and children than might be expected traditionally. With the practice of filial piety in current China, gender differences also exist (Ting, 2009). For example, Yue and Hg (1999) find that females are more obliged to retain contact with elders and less likely to look after or financially support them than their male peers, because daughters normally leave their natal homes and join in their husbands' homes when they get married, whilst sons remain their natal homes.

As mentioned in the background chapter, with the drastic changes of the national policies for university graduates in China, university graduates could make choices

regarding their first jobs to a great extent. Nevertheless, they have been constrained by a number of factors, one of which is parents' expectations. Due to the influence of filial piety, Chinese students pay attention to their parents' expectations when they start their real life, for example, starting their jobs (Deutsch, 2004). Therefore, to satisfy their parents, quite a large number of university students would move close to their homes as expected by their parents (Deutsch, 2004).

The data from the study also confirmed this argument largely, especially for female final year undergraduates. Generally, female final year undergraduates' parents expected them to work near home, so to show their filial piety and satisfy their parents' psychological needs; female final year undergraduates tended to expect a job near their homes. However, for their male peers, they could first disobey their parents' expectations and then come to stay with their parents later in their life course, since in China, sons are normally encouraged to go outside to pursue their careers (*zou chuqu chuang tianxia*) when they are young. In this sense, Chinese parents are still influenced by the traditional idea 'men rule outside and women rule inside' (*nanzhuwai nuzhunei*) (Tang, Chua and O, 2010).

Studies have also found that male university students are more independent and therefore have more chances to make their own decisions than their female peers (Sun and Wei, 2008); therefore, they tend to use different approaches to communicate with their parents. In detail, males are more likely to be encouraged by their parents whereas females are more likely to be submissive to their parents' authority (Sun and Wei, 2008), which is backed up by a number of studies. For example, Chin (1988) also finds that there is a higher likelihood for girls to give in to their parents when they disagree with their parents than for boys, because they will feel guilty if they disappoint or hurt their parents. Therefore, this makes sense of the fact that male final year undergraduates behaved differently from their female counterparts in terms of how to communicate with their parents, and how to deal with their parents' expectations for where they should work for their first jobs.

8.3 Implications

Based on the previous discussion, this study has some implications, which cover legal change, policy change, culture change and changes within the education system.

8.3.1 Legal change

Confronting the dilemma encountered by Chinese women, even highly educated women, the Chinese government should take actions if it sincerely wishes to take effective steps in protecting women's rights and interests. A number of changes will be of great necessity; the foremost change will be legal change, which encompasses publishing a special law addressing sex discrimination in the labour market and strengthening the enforcement and monitoring of current laws and regulations.

Firstly, it is of great necessity to publish a law addressing sex discrimination. Indeed, China has already published a number of laws that help to protect women's rights and interests, such as the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women. However, those laws have very limited coverage of sex discrimination (Bulger, 2000). For example, as argued by Chen (2003), existing laws tend to regulate women's rights and interests during their pregnancy, maternity leave and childrearing, but they lack regulations pertaining to the recruitment, promotion and retirement of women employees. Even though there are some laws protecting women's rights and interests, they are not operable (Bulger, 2000). Because China's legal system is not mature, rather, it is largely rhetorical in terms of promoting gender equality (Nolan, 2009).

Therefore, it might be advisable to get some experiences from other societies where laws on sex discrimination has been published and enforced for decades. For example, the UK and other countries in the European Union have identified and proscribed direct and indirect forms of sex discrimination against women (Taylor and Emir 2006), which make it unlawful to practice discrimination against women in a wide range of employment activities, such as recruitment, promotion and pay (Kirton and Greene 2006; Lupton and Woodhams 2006). Thus, based on China's peculiar context and other countries' experiences, the Chinese government needs to publish a special law addressing sex discrimination, defining various types of sex discrimination in different domains, for example, the labour market, since 'there are no universally accepted legal definitions of discrimination or gender discrimination in China' (Yang and Li, 2009, p. 304). What is more, the punishment of any unlawful practice of sex discrimination should be specified and effective enforcement of how to avoid sex discrimination should also be included.

In addition, the enforcement and monitoring of current laws and regulations should be strengthened. As discussed above, although China has published a set of laws protecting women's rights and interests, the enforcement of those laws has been ineffective (Cooke, 2001; Fu, 2009; Zheng and Han, 2010), given that the punishment of any violation of sex discrimination is largely administrative rather than legal in action (Cooke, 2001). One needs to bear in mind that '[L]aw without enforcement is meaningless' (Yang and Li, 2009, p. 303).

Therefore, a few actions regarding the enforcement and monitoring of current laws and regulations are worth noting. Firstly, a new private cause of actions for violations of sex discrimination should be built into the legal system in China (Bulger, 2000). Secondly, it might be useful to set up a special organization, for example, the Committee of Equal Opportunity for Employment, which could improve the gender

equality in the labour market (Chen, 2003). Scholars have proposed to set up organizations that could improve gender equality in the employment in some developed areas in China. For example, Xu, Li and Chen (2009) argue that it is quite urgent to set up a monitoring and consulting institution for gender equality and employment in Shanghai, China. Thirdly, if sex discrimination is believed to have occurred, it should be possible to have a legal challenge to the employer; individuals currently have to tackle unfair employment practices with legal support. Finally, it would be advisable to improve the credentials of the Chinese legal intellectuals which could facilitate them to have better understanding of each case so that they could react properly, because some scholars argue that the Chinese legal staff lack education and training (e.g., Potter, 1999).

8.3.2 Policy change

In Western countries, family-friendly policies normally encompass family leave policy, early childhood education and care policy, working time policy (Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007; Gornick and Meyers, 2003) and paternity leave policy (Barker *et al.*, 2010). Family-friendly policies need to be tailored to the Chinese situation, given that China is different from Western countries in terms of its social welfare regime, economic structure, and so on.

Firstly, for the family leave policy, the regulations of protecting women employees regulates that women normally could have 90 days for maternity leave (Xinhuanet, 2010d), which is much shorter than most of the European countries. For example, in Portugal, mothers have 120 days with full pay maternity leave; while in Hungary, the corresponding number is 24 weeks, and new mothers are fully paid (Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007). Nowadays in China, it is suggested that maternity leave should extend to 6 months (China Daily, 2010), but the proposal is still in discussion.

Secondly, as discussed in the chapter two, there exist some problems in China's childcare system, such as, lack of investment (UNICEF, 2007) and its role has been downplayed in support of women's labour force participation (e.g., Du and Dong, 2008). Therefore, childcare should be invested properly in order to provide Chinese children with a high quality of care, and childcare policy should serve for improving women's labour force participation.

Thirdly, in terms of working time policy, as argued by Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes (2007, p. 46), 'working time options, such as part-time work opportunities, flexible starting and finishing times or working time accounts, are also important determinants of the way women and men divide paid and unpaid work'. In this point, given China's particular context, flexible starting and finishing times would be applicable.

Finally, alongside these policies specially addressing women's issues, it might be also necessary to address men's issues as well in a family, such as introducing a paternity leave policy. Paternity leave policy is regarded as one of the most effective ways to shift societal views of men's roles as being solely breadwinners and to get men involved in their children's lives (BBC, 2005). A number of countries in the world have already published various paternity policies. For example, men in Cameroon can enjoy 10 days' paid leave for family events (Ruxton, 2009). In Australia, men could have 18 weeks paternity leave at the national minimum wage (currently 570 Australia dollars) (Australia Labour, 2011). Although women in China could find alternatives to help them with child care (see chapter two), the research data in the present study show that very few men would like to take the main responsibility of looking after their children; reasons underpinning their choices might result from the social norms that expect women take the main responsibility of looking after the children. In this sense, it would be of significance to change the traditional social

norms of men outside and women inside if China is to introduce a paternity leave policy.

8.3.3 Cultural change

It is argued that cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality, although not sufficient (Inglehart and Norris, 2003), as perceptions of the roles division between men and women in the home, paid employment and the political arena are shaped by the predominant culture - the social norms, beliefs and value systems in any society (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Therefore, it is certainly necessary to address cultural change in order to achieve gender equality in China.

Before addressing how to possibly change the Chinese culture so that gender equality could be achieved, it is important to have a clear picture of people's awareness of men's and women's positions in the home, paid employment and political sphere, as a measure of testing gender equality attitudes. Additionally, 'religion continues to exert a strong influence on social norms about the appropriate division of sex roles in the home, the workplace, and the public sphere, especially in agrarian societies' (Inglehart and Norris, 2003, p. 49), therefore, it is of great importance to examine the relationship between the mainstream religions and social norms about gender equality as well.

Both international and national surveys have examined people's gender equality attitudes in China (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Ma, 2004). Inglehart and Norris's (2003) international comparative study²⁰, using five items to examine peoples' attitudes toward politics, the workplace, education and the family²¹, shows that China

²⁰ The comparative study covered more than 70 countries, over 80 percent of the world's population, and conducted between 1981 and 2001. See Inglehart and Norris (2003) for details.

²¹ The five items are: 1) 'on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do', 2) 'when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women', 3) 'a university education is more important for a

ranked 45th, out of 61 countries, including post-industrial (e.g., Finland, UK, US), industrial (e.g., Argentina, Chile, Greece, Portugal) and agrarian ones (e.g., China, India, Morocco and Nigeria) in terms of gender equality. China's national survey on the social status of Chinese women conducted in 2000 contains more details about people's attitudes toward gender equality. It shows that 1) 50.4% of women and 53.9% of men still agree with the argument 'men mainly working outside, women mainly doing housework', which examines people's views toward the traditional role of men and women; 2) 31.2% of women and 31.6% men agree with the statement 'men's ability is inherently stronger than that of women'; 3) in terms of the argument 'success in work is not as good as success in marriage', an understanding of women's social role, 37.3% of women and 30.2% of men agree with the argument; 4) with respect to the argument 'women's looks are more important than their abilities when seeking jobs' that reflects equal opportunity of employment, 29.1% of women and 30.7% of men show their approval toward it; and 5) when addressing people's attitudes to policy-making of women at high level by using the question 'at least 30% of leaders at high level in the government should be women, 74.7% of women and 75.5% of men show their agreement (Ma, 2004). These surveys collectively show that both men and women in China still have a number of inegalitarian beliefs about the roles of women and men.

During China's long history, the mainstream religions in China are Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and these have had a negative impact on gender equality. As discussed earlier in chapter two, Confucianism and neo-Confucianism have helped to entrench women's subordinate social status in China for a long time (Leung, 2003; Yuan, 2005). Buddhism, an imported religion, is perhaps another main source of the view of women's inferiority (Li, 1995). For example, it is argued that 'women are the source of all evils on earth because female sexuality causes men to commit crimes' (Li, 1995, p. 411). Taoism, an indigenous religion, is influential for its Yin-Yang

boy than a girl', 4) 'do you think that a women has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary' and 5) 'if a women wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?'.

concept. As Walstedt (1978) points out, Yin is supposed to embody all qualities that are weak, soft, dark, cool, passive, inner-directed and downward; while Yang is supposed to represent strong, hard, bright, hot, positive, outer-directed and upward. When the Yin-Yang concept is used to interpret the sexes, Yang was linked to male, and had historically been seen as superior and dominant; while Yin, linked to female, as inferior and subordinate (Walstedt. 1978). Therefore, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism have collectively shaped women's subordinate social position in China's long history.

So far, it is apparent that both the inegalitarian beliefs of men and women and the mainstream religions in China have made gender equality a difficult task to achieve. However, it would be possible to improve the degree of gender equality if a few affirmative actions addressing cultural change are enacted. To begin with, it is imperative for the Chinese government to work with international organizations in addressing gender equality through culture change. For example, the UN has published the 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' that requires states to modify social-cultural attitudes and practices that disadvantage women (UN, 2007)²². Indeed, the Chinese government has already taken some actions addressing gender equality, for example, focusing on the important role of the media in promoting gender equality and overcoming discrimination and prejudice against women as well as on the role of parents in educating their children regarding gender equality (the Government of China, 2004). Nevertheless, I would argue that these approaches are not sufficient, thus, they should be linked to other approaches, for example, legal and educational approaches,

²² In article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it states that 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women; (b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases'. See the website of UN for a review (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article5>).

in addressing gender equality.

A second aspect would be that the Chinese government should dedicate to creating space for discussion of gender and culture issues (UNESCO, 2003). Of course, the discussion should be based on fact, rather than assumption, so that women's voices could be heard (UNESCO, 2003).

A third point should enhance the linkage between culture and China's modernization. Studies find that people in industrial and post-industrial countries hold more egalitarian beliefs about the roles of women and men than those who in agrarian countries (Inglehart and Norris, 2003), for example, China.

A final point might be that the Chinese government needs to critically employ the mainstream religions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism to realize the target of gender equality in China. That is to say, the Chinese government should make good use of the positive aspects of those religions, for example, Taoism has actually worshipped femininity (Li, 1995), on the one hand. On the other, it should also dismiss the negative aspects of the religions and advocate a new gender equality culture in China that emphasizes such issues as the individual needs, equity, women's self-independence, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-improvement and self-love (Zhao and Zhao, 2009).

8.3.4 Change within the education system

Education is one of the most effective approaches to realizing gender equality (Wilson, 2004). However, there is a body of evidence showing that gender inequality still widely exists in China's education system, with a wide range of expressions. Firstly, it is apparent that gender equality awareness in the curriculum and pedagogy

is weak. For example, Shi (2002) found that in children's textbooks, women (75%) were more likely to appear in the textbooks than men (25%), she thought this might be related to the fact that women were more inclined to be active at home than men, which reflected the Chinese social norms 'men outside and women inside'. In terms of those people's occupations, all scientists and soldiers were men, whereas all teachers and three-quarters of people working in the service occupation were women (Shi, 2002). This argument is in tandem with other findings. For example, Jing (2006) observed that men were more likely to be politicians, scientists and soldiers whereas women were inclined to be primary school teachers, or textile workers in textbooks used in China's primary and secondary education. With respect to pedagogy, scholars also argue that evidence of lack of gender equality consciousness still exists in China's classrooms. Li, Q. Y. (2009) noted that women students were asked easy questions while their male peers were asked difficult questions, which to some extent showed that teachers have a traditional gender idea 'men are superior to women'.

Secondly, teachers also lack gender awareness (Li, Q. Y., 2009; Zhou, 2007). A wide range of examples showing teachers' weak gender consciousness are found in China's educational settings. For example, teachers have some gender stereotypes during their teaching activities, they tend to regard that female students have a good academic performance in the Arts compared to males in Sciences (Li, Q. Y., 2009). What is more, gender distribution of male and female teachers is unbalanced in all levels, with more women teachers being primary school teachers and more men being teachers at higher levels and being management staff in China's educational system (Li, Q. Y., 2009).

Thirdly, students' subject and occupational choices are still gendered. Males and females continue to follow the traditional 'male' and 'female' programmes in China (Mycos, 2009). In their survey, Mycos (2009) found that female students were more

likely to study in such programmes like Nursing (93%), Foreign Language Studies (79%), Chinese Studies (69%), Education (65%) and Library and Archive Studies (59%). While male students were interested in studying programmes like Geology (84%), Mechanical Engineering (84%), Energy and Power (83%) and Civil Engineering (78%). The stereotypes of students' subject choices might result in their further occupational choices (Tett and Riddell, 2006). Evidence of stereotypical occupational choices has been widely documented in China. As discussed in chapter six, there is still sex segregation for female university graduates regarding their occupational choices (Mycos, 2009; Shi and Wang, 2009). Females were more likely to enter occupations that were less socially valued and paid, for example, Education, with average yearly salary of 29,831 RMB in 2008 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2009); whereas males were inclined to enter occupations that are well paid, for example, Geologic Survey that offers 45,512 RMB in the same period (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2009).

In addressing these problems and achieving gender equality in and through education, a number of actions need to be put into practice. In terms of improving gender equality in curriculum and pedagogies, the first initiative should ensure a widespread consultation on designing a curriculum, and it is worth mobilising marginalized groups (e.g., girls) to participate in the consultation and to consider how gender equality has been raised through discussion (Aikman, 2003). The second point should be that the curriculum needs to be audited to avoid gender stereotypes from a gender perspective (Colclough, 2004). Pedagogy is more about how to teach, which is largely teachers' responsibility. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to be 'trained and empowered to analyze and challenge gender stereotyping and gender bias in curriculum materials, in language use and means of communication in classrooms and schools' (Aikman, 2004, p. 14). Also, it might be necessary for teachers to get informed about policies or regulations regarding gender equality and

pedagogy in a wide context, national and international (Aikman, 2004).

In respect of addressing teachers' weak gender equality awareness, firstly, it is of great significance to legitimize gender equality into teacher training through national laws (Chen, 2007; Zhou, 2007), making those laws operational. Secondly, it would be effective to develop a focus on gender equality for teachers, both at pre-service and in-service stage (Aikman, 2004; Zhou, 2007).

In terms of gendered subject and occupational choices, first, as argued by Tett and Riddell (2006), it is of importance to discuss and challenge subject and work choices early in a pupil's career so that it is possible for both girls and boys to make gender atypical choices with fewer barriers and structural inequalities. Second, when students choose subjects, it is indispensable to encourage both boys and girls to cross the so-called boundary of stereotypical 'male' and 'female' subjects. For example, girls could be encouraged to study Science subjects (Colclough, 2004). Thirdly, upon university students' graduation, female students need to be encouraged to be more ambitious, and to widen their occupational choices. Fourthly, it would be advisable to raise university students' consciousness of gender equality and further to protect their rights through lectures, workshops or whatever approaches that address issues such as what are their rights, what constitutes violations of the rights, how to protect the rights and whom they could seek for help. Finally, an interesting point is to offer some fatherhood preparation and house chores courses in the education system so that it could keep boys and men well-informed about child care and housework (Baker, *et al.*, 2010).

In summary, gender equality is not an easy task to achieve in China. Therefore, systematic changes need to be addressed which cover legal change, policy change, culture change and change within the education system. These changes should be

linked together in order to form a more effective approach to addressing gender equality.

8.4 Limitations of the study

Apart from what I have achieved so far in the present study, there are also some limitations that need to be considered.

Firstly, the research setting was a university in central China; of course, it was not representative but no university can represent all universities in China. Therefore, it should not be a problem as long as it facilitated a good understanding of the research topic. China is a vast country in terms of its territory, and it is also an uneven country in relation to its socio-economic conditions. Therefore, when I explored final year undergraduates' working region expectations, I firstly grouped China into four big regions based on the classification of geo-economics, then I attempted to explore which region those final year undergraduates would like to go. The results emerging from the present empirical study have echoed a large online survey that has been discussed in chapter seven. However, studies carried out in other regions in China seem to have different findings. For example, a survey based on university students in Shanghai finds that 86.2% of university students expected to stay in Shanghai, even though 75.2 % of them were not from Shanghai (He, 2006). Another study conducted in Nanjing, East China reveals that almost half of the students (45.8%) want to work in coastal areas in China, 21.3 % of them would like to stay in Nanjing (Xu and Bu, 2006). Therefore, the findings in the present study should be read and interpreted in its context, and one needs to avoid making big claims based on the study. In this case, a more representative survey drawing samples from different areas in China would be helpful to better understand the working region expectations of final year undergraduates.

Secondly, in terms of addressing final year undergraduates' occupational expectations, the sample was a little bit problematic. The case university has been undergoing a transition from a teacher-training university to a university that is more comprehensive in terms of the programmes it offers. As a result, nowadays, there are more non teacher-training programmes than teacher-training programmes in the university, with 24 for the former and 18 for the latter. With regard to the research sample in the study, final year undergraduates from both non teacher-training programmes and teacher-training programmes have participated in the survey, making the sample as representative as possible. However, the results of final year undergraduates' occupational expectations tend to be homogenous to some extent.

Thirdly, this study has offered little account of the relationship between family backgrounds (e.g., family income, parents' education levels and parents' occupations) and final year undergraduates' employment expectations, from a perspective of gender difference. Some studies have found that there is a link between family backgrounds and university students' employment expectations. For example, Psacharopoulos (1977) argues that parental income positively affects university students' expected earnings. Smith and Powell's (1990) research on the factors affecting final year undergraduates' salary expectations is more focused on the relationship between the background characteristics, especially father's educational level and children's salary expectations. They conclude that 'given similar income background, students whose father had a relatively low educational level expected comparatively high income from their own investment in college' (1990, p. 194). In the present study, the link between family backgrounds and final year undergraduates' employment expectations, especially salary expectations, existed. For example, final year undergraduates whose parents possessed managerial and professional jobs tended to have higher salary expectations than those whose parents did not have jobs in the occupation, which was the case for both males and their female counterparts. What is more, parents' managerial and professional jobs had a stronger influence in improving male final year undergraduates' salary expectations than in improving those of their female peers. However, those findings have not been explored, which

comprises another limitation.

Finally, generalization of the findings in the study seems difficult to make. This is firstly because the sampling method of the questionnaire survey, which is a sort of non-random sampling, made it difficult to have statistical generalization, which means extrapolating from a sample to a population (Pilot and Beck, 2010). Secondly, the interview sample size is small (26), which makes it difficult to make generalizations about the results (Boyce and Neale 2006).

8.5 Directions for further research

The present study has demystified some puzzles regarding gender differences in final year undergraduates' employment expectations, but it has also left some untouched or less addressed issues that need to be explored for further research.

Firstly, the relationship between employment expectations and actual job outcomes is an interesting topic that deserves more attention. With the increasing difficulty of getting employment for university graduates, quite a number of scholars argued that it is university graduates' high employment expectations that have resulted in the employment dilemma (Wang, 2006; Wu and Wu, 2007; Zeng, 2007; Zhang and Pang, 2007). Meanwhile, some scholars argue that although the employment expectations of university students are a little high, it has been a rational choice under the condition of uncertain future, the lack of labour market information as well as the high cost of higher education for university students (Wu and Sun, 2005). In China, there has been a third voice about the relationship between high employment expectations and actual job outcomes, namely, high employment expectations don't necessarily lead to unemployment of university students (Wang, 2004). No matter whether or not high employment expectations have led to the difficulty of being

employed, the relationship between final year undergraduates' employment expectations and their actual job outcomes might be of great interest. Studies focusing on the issue could explore whether or not the employment expectations are consistent with their actual job outcomes. If yes, why? And if not, what factors have actually contributed to the inconsistency? Is there any gender difference? Related to the topic, research could also pay attention to whether or not university graduating students have adjusted (mainly lowered) their employment expectations when they have had real job hunting experiences, since employment expectations are a little bit ideal, whilst situations in the labour market are realistic. Are male final year undergraduates' adjusting strategies different from those of their female peers? This question also deserves further exploration.

Secondly, employment expectations in the present study have been broken down into salary expectations, occupational expectations and working region expectations. Generally in China, salary, occupation and working region are three issues that concern university graduating students most. However, they might also be concerned with other aspects of employment, for example, whether or not a job will provide a good platform for university graduates to exert their knowledge and skills? In other words, employment expectations may include other sub employment expectations. For example, the questionnaire data in the present study reported that developmental opportunity was also one of the main considerations that final year undergraduates have to care about; however, it has almost been overlooked in the present study due to the limitation of time and effort. Nevertheless, there might be gender differences in the developmental opportunity expectations. Therefore, gender differences in other sub employment expectations (e.g., developmental opportunity expectations) also could be a potential topic. Once again, a mixed-methods research would be appropriate to gather rich data and therefore shed some light on the particular topic. Finally, by addressing the third limitation in the study, another direction could be

formulated. Further research could address the impact of family backgrounds on university students' employment expectations through a gender lens. Some salient family backgrounds could include parents' education levels, parents' occupations and family income. Other family backgrounds could also be included based on China's context, for example, place of origin, given that there is still a big gap between rural and urban China. Therefore, students from rural China might have quite different employment expectations from their peers from urban China.

8.6 Conclusion

When addressing gender differences in the labour market, scholars have proposed various perspectives to account for the *status quo*. Individualist approaches tend to highlight personal factors, for example, personal human capital, personal choice; a typical scholar is Hakim who argues that in prosperous societies like Britain and the United States, personal choices become a central determinant of life choices including job choices (Hakim, 2006 and 2008). On the other hand, structuralist approaches treat social organizations as imposing constraints on individuals and are more concerned with social factors as the focus of their research (Abrams, 1982; Giddens, 1979, cited in Wharton, 1991, p. 376). Both the individualist and the structuralist approaches have contributed to our understanding of gender differences in the labour market, however, they are one-sided as they have either underscored individual or social factors that affect gender differences in the labour market. There is, of course, a third camp that has emphasized both individual and social factors, which could be depicted as the 'choice and constraint' perspective. A number of scholars have contributed to the area (e.g., Crompton and Harris, 1998; McRae, 2003). All of them argue that women and men can choose, however, their choices are limited by various constraints, some could be structural, and others could be

individual.

This study has critically employed the ‘choice and constraint’ framework. It finds that in terms of employment expectations, male and female final year undergraduates certainly can make their choices, however, their choices have been framed by a number of constraints that have functioned both at the individual and societal level. In detail, firstly, this study attributes gender differences in salary expectations to the economic role division in households between the genders and the experienced or perceived sex discrimination in the labour market. They are societal constraints that impose on both male and female final year undergraduates’ choice-making when it comes to employment expectations. In respect of gender differences in occupational expectations, the study contends that it might be related to personal job preference that is a constraint functioning at the individual level. However, some items belong to the personal job preference are still affected by extra-individual factors, for example, social expectations for the roles males and females, as mentioned earlier. While with gender differences in working region expectations, the study argues that this is partly associated with parents’ different expectations for their children, which acts as a societal constraint.

Individual constraints interweave with societal constraints and there maybe some interconnections among societal or individual constraints themselves. When applied to the present study, there are some interconnections among those constraints that impose on male and female final year undergraduates’ choices regarding employment expectations. For instance, gender differences in salary expectations partly resulted from the fact that males and females had to play quite different economic roles in the family, namely, males were the breadwinners, but females were not. Whilst for gender differences in working region expectations, males preferred to work in East China, and the underpinning reason was that the salary in that area was higher than

other regions in China, since a higher salary would help them to properly play the breadwinner role in the family.

These constraints have collectively led to the gender differences in employment expectations with women in a disadvantageous position. A vivid example would be that females had lower salary expectations than their male peers. In this study, gender differences in employment expectations have acted as a lens through which gender differences in the labour market could be discerned. This study, together with other studies addressing gender differences in the labour market (see the background chapter), has reconfirmed women's unfavourable status in China's labour market, with no exception for highly educated women university graduates. Then, how could we achieve gender equality in China's labour market?

Changing women's disadvantaged position in China's labour market will involve a radical challenge to existing power relations in which women are disadvantaged. This would include raising women's consciousness of their socio-economic position, developing women's and men's gender equality consciousness and implementing anti-patriarchal initiatives in the Chinese labour market.

Firstly, it is necessary to raise women's consciousness of their socio-economic position. Chinese women's consciousness is very weak due to the long-term shackling of women with feudalism ethics (He, 2008). In feudal China, as women were ruled by the division of the labour force and Confucianism ethics, women were inclined to depend on men. Before their marriage, they must rely on their fathers for food; and whilst being married, they had to rely on their husbands. Gradually, Chinese women became dependent upon men, not only physically, but also psychologically.

It is worth noting that women's social and economic awareness is stronger than ever before. Take women's organizations for example, in 2010, there were approximately

833,000 women's organizations at the grassroots level in China, and Chinese women have their own organization as well, the ACWF (Xiao, 2010). However, the Chinese government has ambivalent feelings about gender equality. On the one hand, women's organizations were allowed to be established to protect women's rights and interests and to improve gender equality (ACWF, 2008). On the other, all those organizations are under the leadership of the male-dominated CCP (Zhou, 2003). Consequently, those organizations may act as a tool for implementing the party's policies and regulations, rather than an independent arbiter, for women (Woo, 1994). Until now, when even women's organizations are controlled by the CCP, what other organizations and agencies could help Chinese women to speak out?

In raising women's awareness, two points may need to be borne in mind: a separate goal and education. As mentioned above, the Chinese government's strong control parallels with its limited interest in initiatives that promote gender equality, so it is impossible to achieve the real gender equality within in the current regime (Zhou, 2003). Therefore, achieving gender equality requires a separate goal that stands apart from a solo focus on China's economic development (Woo, 1994). This would require the development of an independent women's movement that is beyond the control of the Chinese government, which encourages a wide range of women's voices and views to be expressed (Woo, 1994).

In addition, education also plays a crucial role in women's autonomy. For example, Zhou argued:

Education provides more opportunities for women's employment, enlightens women's self-consciousness, inspires women to fight for their rights, nurtures women's spiritual life, and opens up more channels for women's liberation (Zhou, 2003, P. 75)

The Chinese women's movement of the 1910s shows that those who were more active in fighting for women's rights are those who possessed more education (Zhu, 2009). Studies also find that it is well-educated women writers who are more likely to speak for women's rights and interests and to get women's voices heard in current China than others (e.g., Li, Z. X., 1994). With good education, Chinese women can

be aware of their socio-economic position individually at first, and then they are able to unite together, to seek women's rights, and they can also encourage other less educated women to be more aware of their autonomy so as to fight for, protect, and widen their rights.

Secondly, alongside raising women's autonomy consciousness, it might be a requisite to develop women's and men's consciousness of gender equality. For example, as discussed in the research finding chapters, those Chinese university graduating students, albeit highly educated, were still not clearly aware of gender equality, or believed that discrimination existed in the abstract so they might underestimate its impact on their own lives (Crosby, 1982). Other studies also reveal that university students in China have pretty weak gender equality consciousness during their job hunting process (e.g., Wang, 2002). In her study, Wang (2002) observed that almost half of both male (47%) and female (41.5%) university graduates agreed that the employer could use sex as a means to limit job applicants' choices. It is common that in the labour market, women are more likely to be discriminated against by employers. Therefore, if women university students had strong consciousness of gender equality, they could attempt to fight for their own rights and interests that could further change the gender differences, particularly sex discrimination, in the labour market.

Finally, implementing anti-patriarchal initiatives in the labour market is another point worth noting. Walby (1990, p. 53) argues that there are two patriarchal strategies in employment: exclusion strategies that aim at 'totally preventing women' access to an area of employment, or indeed to all paid employment' and segregation strategies that aim at 'separating women's from men's work and at grading the former beneath the latter for the purposes of remuneration and status'.

I would argue that vivid expressions of these two strategies can be found in China's labour market. Firstly, some Chinese laws or regulations help to exclude women from some work categories, paradoxically. For example, the Women's Rights

Protection Law (1992) implicitly states that some work is unfit for women (ACFTU, 2010a). Additionally, the Regulations Governing Labour Protection for Female Staff Members and Workers (1998) also identify some particular periods for a women worker in which she needs special treatment: menstruation, pregnancy, delivery and nursing (Woo, 1994). For example, during menstruation women workers must not work at high altitudes, in places with low temperature or in cold water (ACFTU, 2010b). It is obvious that the regulations have imposed limits on the types and conditions of work women can engage in (Woo, 1994). Theoretically, those laws and regulations have helped to protect women's rights to some extent, however, practically; they act as walls that keep women out of certain types of work (Woo, 1994). What is more, women are prohibited from these employment only in particular periods (menstruation, pregnancy, delivery and nursing), but the reality is that 'these regulations may deter employers from hiring women at all' (Woo, 1994, p. 283). Women, very often, have to face sex discrimination on the pretext of the high cost of maternity leave (Nolan, 2009), which has been confirmed by some interviewees in the study. These consequently result in the exclusion of women from some work categories which further narrows women's occupational choices.

The other patriarchal strategies in China's labour market are segregations. As reported in the background chapter, although women have made inroads into some occupations that are traditionally defined as males' occupations, for example, Engineering, sex segregation in China's labour market still widely persists (Wu and Wu, 2009). Take the 'Party Agencies and Social Organizations' occupation for example, in 1997, female comprised less than one-fourth (23.4%) of the staff working the occupation (China Statistical Yearbook, 1998). However, until 2008, the proportion of female staff had only slightly increased to 27.7 per cent (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, 2009). The gendered composition of the 'Party Agency and Social Organizations' occupation has been reflected in the present study as both in

the questionnaire survey and the interviews, there were more males than females expecting to work in the occupation. Reasons for women's lower representations in the occupation are multiple, but one of the reasons is *guanxi* (Guo, 2001), broadly defined as mutually beneficial relationships established over the long term (Nolan, 2009). Because of gendered assumptions, women are less capable of playing *guanxi* than their male counterparts in China (Nolan, 2009). As a result, getting access to these occupations would be more difficult for women job applicants than for their male peers. This is merely one example showing sex segregation in China's labour market, which acts as a mechanism for separating women from men.

Although it shares some similarities of patriarchal strategies in employment with other societies, China has its unique characteristics of practicing patriarchy in employment, which could be regarded as 'paternalist patriarchy' (Rai, 1992, p. 20). On the one hand, the CCP believe themselves as the 'champion of women's emancipation' (Rai, 1992, p. 20), and therefore, they act as 'the guarantor of women's rights against a system of social oppression' (Rai, 1992, p.21). During the economic transformations in the past few decades, the CCP has loosened its control on some issues of the economy, for example, the allocation of jobs for university graduates. However, ironically, the CCP's political power on economic affairs remains influential via policy-making and implementing laws and regulations regarding employment (Rai, 1992). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Chinese government has published a number of laws and policies that aim to protect women's rights theoretically; however, those laws and policies have had an adverse impact on women's entry to some types of jobs. This kind of paternalist patriarchy further complicates the other two patriarchal strategies in employment.

Therefore, to promote anti-patriarchy in employment in China, it might be worth considering loosening the Chinese government's political control over some

economic issues. One would expect the ACWF to attack patriarchal practices in China's labour market; however, they are licensed by the government, thus they could perform only in certain areas that are permitted by the government (Rai, 1992; Zhou, 2003). In this point, it is imperative for the government to withdraw from the patriarchal practices in the labour market.

Alongside addressing the three points mentioned above, there are two more points that might be of considerable significance: adopting a collectivist strategy and uniting with men to work for gender equality.

To begin with, before adopting a collectivist strategy, it is necessary to awaken the collective consciousness of Chinese women because

If the collective consciousness of Chinese women were awakened, then we could definitely see enlightened women actively involved in society and would see self-improvement and consciousness-raising movements for women (Li, X. J., 1994, p. 382).

Then, in China, as argued by Woo (1994), there is no individualist tradition; rather, human beings are viewed as members of a family and of a community. Therefore, 'gender equality in China must be viewed in the context of the Chinese preference for collective rights' (Woo, 1994, p. 290). Thus, a collectivist strategy of gender equality would be a strategy that defines rights and interests of the collective in a way that ensures greater equality for women (Finley, 1986).

Secondly, uniting men to work for gender equality is also an important point. Indeed, so far, society has been male-centred (Li, X. J., 1994). Therefore, the society has been structured mainly following men's ideas resulting in the fact that men rather than women can fully develop their skills. By contrast, women have been excluded from men's society. For example, women have fewer seats as politicians, and earned lower salaries relative to their male peers. However, to realize women's liberation, men

must also commit to the issue. It is inevitable that women's liberation would lead to men's resistance for a series of reasons, such as material benefits and ideological defence of male supremacy (Connell, 2003). Nevertheless, without men's support, the target of gender equality will not be achieved. Actually, men have been unavoidably involved in gender issues for a number of reasons. For example, Connell (2003, p. 3) argues that:

[g]ender relations are an interactive system of connections and distinctions among people (and groups of people) - what happens to one group in this system affects the others, and is affected by them.

Thus, for the target of gender equality, women themselves not only must work hard, but also they need to encourage men to push society forward in order to provide them with a good environment to develop their skills and empower themselves, so that they can improve their status in the labour market.

Gender equality in the labour market is not an easy task to achieve; rather, multiple issues must be addressed. By raising women's autonomy, developing women's and men's gender equality consciousness and implementing anti-patriarchal initiatives in the labour market, using a collectivist strategy and with men's commitments, women's voices could be stronger, both in public and private arenas. As a result, women's choices regarding employment could be less constrained and more 'free', and women's unequal treatment compared with their male peers could be minimized substantially.

In sum, considering the Chinese peculiar background, the Chinese government, men and women have to play their roles in achieving gender equality if women's issues are to be seriously dealt with. The Chinese government should dedicate itself to creating a favourable environment for women's development; while women as well as men, especially female university graduates, could act as pioneers in terms of

raising women's consciousness of autonomy and of developing women's and men's consciousness of gender equality. To achieve real gender equality in the labour market, there is still a long way to go for Chinese society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Questionnaire Survey: Gender Differences in the Employment Expectations of Final Year Undergraduates in China

Dear final year undergraduates,

Thanks for joining me for the questionnaire survey.

I am Jian Zhu, a PhD candidate in the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh, UK. I am looking at Gender differences in the employment expectations of final year undergraduates in China as my PhD research project, which has been funded by the China Scholarship Council and the University of Edinburgh. The research will explore whether or not there are any gender differences in the employment expectations. If so, this study will probe factors that have contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations.

Your voluntary cooperation in completing the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. The more response rate I receive and the wider the range of experiences and views I get, the more accurate and informed my analysis will be.

Your answers will be completely confidential. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. The researcher is the only person who could get access to the data.

I would be pleased to answer any questions regarding this questionnaire. Please do not hesitate to contact me by mobile phone: 15172048411 or email: zhujian0102@gmail.com.

Thanks very much for your kind support!

Yours sincerely,

Jian Zhu

.....

How to answer the questions?

In this questionnaire, you usually need to tick the appropriate option for your circumstances, but I have also left space for your additional comments that would be helpful to me in conducting the analysis.

1. If questions are itemed, please tick the box in front of each answer. Please note that you can only choose **one** answer.
 2. If you want to correct your answer, please score out the wrong one. Then mark the right one by ticking the box.
 3. For some questions with 'please specify' and questions with a bracket or a given line, please write your answer in the bracket or on the line given.
 4. For some open questions, I leave some space for you to write. Please write on a separate sheet if necessary.
-

Section A: Higher Education

- 1. Your major** (Please specify your detailed studying programme. For example, “English” major usually consists of “English education” and “Business English” areas, so if you are majoring in one of them, just write it down. Please do not write only “English”.)

You are majoring in ()

- 2. Please mark your academic performance (relative to your classmates) in the following scale.**

- ☐ (1) Very good ☐ (2) Good ☐ (3) Medium
☐ (4) Not good ☐ (5) Not good at all

- 3. Have you had any work experiences during your college life so far?**

- ☐ (1) Yes, please specify the occupation(s) below.

-
- ☐ (2) No

- 4. Are you a member of the Chinese Communist Party?**

- ☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No

- 5. Have you been a student leader so far?**

- ☐ (1) If yes, please choose the hierarchy of the leadership
 ☐ A. University level
 ☐ B. School/college or department level
 ☐ C. Class level
☐ (2) No

- 6. Are you planning continue education after your graduation?**

- ☐ (1) If Yes, please specify the degree and location you intend to pursue
 A. A master’s degree or equivalent ☐ (1) China ☐ (2) Overseas
 B. A professional degree (e.g. MBA, MPA) ☐ (1) China ☐ (2) Overseas
 C. A PhD degree ☐ (1) China ☐ (2) Overseas
☐ (2) No

Section B: Life orientations

- 1. Do you expect to get married?**

- ☐ (1) If yes, please go to question 2 to question 5.
☐ (2) If no, please go to section C.

- 2. Which factor is more important to you?**

- ☐ (1) Family ☐ (2) Work
☐ (3) Both family and work are very important. ☐ (4) I do not know

3. How would you expect your spouse to consider the relationship between family and work?

- ☐ (1) Family first ☐ (2) Work first
☐ (3) Balance family and work ☐ (4) I do not know

4. Are you going to have a child (/children)?

- ☐ (1) If yes, please specify
- A. When do you think is a good time to have a child?
- ☐ (1) Early stage of my career
☐ (2) After my career has established
☐ (3) I do not know
- B. Who has the main responsibility to look after the child if you intend to have a child /children?
- ☐ (1) Me ☐ (2) My spouse ☐ (3) Our parents
☐ (4) Children care organizations ☐ (5) I do not know
- ☐ (2) No

Section C: Employment Expectations

1. How much do you expect to earn every month for your first job (In RMB)?

- ☐ (1) 999 or below ☐ (2) 1,000-1,499 ☐ (3) 1,500-1,999
☐ (4) 2,000-2,499 ☐ (5) 2,500-2,999 ☐ (6) 3,000-3,499
☐ (7) 3,500-3,999 ☐ (8) 4,000-4,499 ☐ (9) 4,500-4,999
☐ (10) 5,000 or above

2. Where do you expect to work?

- ☐ (1) Inside China, please specify the name of the city or province ()
☐ (2) Outside China, please specify the name of the country ()

3. Which occupation do you expect to work?

- ☐ (1) Party agencies and social organizations
☐ (2) Culture and arts, sporting
☐ (3) Health care, social security and welfare
☐ (4) Education
☐ (5) Citizen services and other services
☐ (6) Water conservancy, environment protection
☐ (7) Scientific research and polytechnic services
☐ (8) Tenancy and commercial service
☐ (9) Real estate trade
☐ (10) Finance and insurance
☐ (11) Catering services and accommodation
☐ (12) Wholesale and retail trade
☐ (13) Telecommunications, computer service and software
☐ (14) Transport, storage, and post
☐ (15) Construction
☐ (16) Production and supply of electricity, gas and water

- ☐ (17) Manufacturing
☐ (18) Mining and quarrying
☐ (19) Farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery
☐ (20) Other, please specify ()

4. If you have chosen “Education” as your expected occupation, please tell me what kinds of educational organizations you want to work? If have not, please ignore this question.

- ☐ (1) Kindergarten ☐ (2) Primary school ☐ (3) Junior high school
☐ (4) Senior high school or equivalent ☐ (5) Higher education institution
☐ (6) Educational training organizations ☐ (7) Other, please specify ()

5. Which factor is the most important to you when hunting for a job?

- ☐ (1) Occupation ☐ (2) Region
☐ (3) Earning ☐ (4) Other, please specify ()

6. Please indicate how you would rate the following characteristics of a job.

Please note that 5 = “very important”, 4 = “important”, 3 = “medium”, 2 = “not important”, 1 = “not at all important”.

Items	5	4	3	2	1
a .Opportunity to use your knowledge and skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Pleasant social environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Opportunity to pursue continuous learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. High income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Challenging tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Good career prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Enough time for leisure activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Opportunity to do something useful for society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Pleasant working environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Chances for a promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Opportunity to balance family and work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Big cities (including provincial cities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Health insurance and stipends for retirement and house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Opportunity to pursue your own ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section D: Demography

1. Gender

☐ (1) Male

☐ (2) Female

2. Place of origin

(1) Please indicate the name of the province or municipalities you come from

(2) Please indicate your hometown

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Big cities (including provincial cities) | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Small and medium cities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Counties and towns | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Country sides |

3. Parental occupations

A. Father ()

B. Mother ()

4. Parental educational levels

Father

- ☐ (1) Doctorate
- ☐ (2) Master's degree or equivalent
- ☐ (3) College degree (Four years)
- ☐ (4) College education (Three years)
- ☐ (5) Senior high school or equivalent
- ☐ (6) Junior high school
- ☐ (7) Primary school
- ☐ (8) No schooling

Mother

- ☐ (1) Doctorate
- ☐ (2) Master's degree or equivalent
- ☐ (3) College degree (Four years)
- ☐ (4) College education (Three years)
- ☐ (5) Senior high school or equivalent
- ☐ (6) Junior high school
- ☐ (7) Primary school
- ☐ (8) No schooling

5. Annual family income (In RMB)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) 9,999 or below | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) 10,000-19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) 20,000-29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (4) 30,000-39,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) 40,000-49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) 50,000-59,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (7) 60,000-69,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> (8) 70,000 or above | <input type="checkbox"/> (9) I do not know |

6. If there are any aspects that you think would be significant for employment expectations which I have not mentioned, please describe these below.

.....

Finally, would you like to participate in an interview around half an hour? If so, please provide your details below. Please note that I will pay you for the interview.

A. Name:

B. E-mail:

C. Tel or mobile phone number:

.....

Thanks very much for your cooperation!

APPENDIX B:

本科大学毕业生就业期望的性别差异调查问卷

亲爱的大四同学：

您好，非常感谢您参与本次问卷调查！

我是朱剑，现为英国爱丁堡大学教育学院的博士研究生。目前我正在进行一项由英国爱丁堡大学和中国国家留学基金委联合资助的“本科大学毕业生就业期望的性别差异研究”。本项研究属于实证研究，因此希望通过本次问卷调查能够回答以下问题：本科大学毕业生在就业期望上是否存在性别差异？如果存在的话，有哪些因素影响了这些性别差异？因此您的合作对我的研究结论具有及其重要的影响！

参与此次问卷调查属于自愿性质。当然，参与的人越多，我获取的信息也将更多，我对问卷的分析也将更准确和有效。

我承诺，我会严格保密您的相关信息！问卷信息仅用于本课题研究，研究者是唯一可以获取问卷信息的人。如果您有关于问卷的问题请通过电话或电子邮件联系我，联系方式为：Tel: 15172048411; E-mail: zhujian0102@gmail.com。

非常感谢您的大力支持！

祝您一切顺利！

朱 剑

问卷填写说明：

在本问卷中，您只须选择最符合本人实际情况的答案。当然，对于一些开放性问题，请在空白处填写相关信息。

1、对于选择题，请在最适合您的那一个答案前面的方框里打勾。请注意，您只能选择一个答案。

2、对于一些“请指出”问题和一些留有括号或横线的问题，请在括号里或者横线上提供您的答案。

一、 高等教育部分

1、 您的专业（请填写具体专业，如英语专业通常包括“英语教育”和“商务英语”等，因此您的答案应该是“英语教育”或“商务英语”，而不能仅填“英语”。）

您的专业是 ()

2、从大学四年的综合测评情况来看，您的学习成绩如何？

- ☐ (1) 非常好 ☐ (2) 好 ☐ (3) 一般
☐ (4) 不好 ☐ (5) 非常不好

3、您在大学期间有过工作经历吗？（请注意，如果你有全职工作经历，请指出；否则所有的工作经历都当作兼职。）

- ☐ (1) 有，请指出具体的工作单位和您的工作职责
-

- ☐ (2) 没有

4、您是否是中国共产党正式党员？

- ☐ (1) 是 ☐ (2) 否

5、在大学期间，您担任过学生干部吗？

- ☐ (1) 有，请选择您担任过学生干部的最高级别
 ☐ A、校级 ☐ B、院系级 ☐ C、班级
☐ (2) 没有

6、大学毕业后您有进一步学习的打算吗？

- ☐ (1) 有，请指出您打算攻读何种学位和在何处学习？（请选择您打算攻读的最高学位）
 A、硕士学位及其相关 ☐ (1) 中国 ☐ (2) 海外
 B、职业学位（如工商管理硕士等） ☐ (1) 中国 ☐ (2) 海外
 C、博士学位 ☐ (1) 中国 ☐ (2) 海外
☐ (2) 没有

二、生活价值取向

1、您今后打算结婚吗？

- ☐ (1) 打算，请继续回答下面的问题
☐ (2) 不打算，如选此项，请直接转到第三部分

2、您认为家庭和工作哪个更重要？

- ☐ (1) 家庭 ☐ (2) 工作
☐ (3) 家庭和工作都重要 ☐ (4) 不好说

3、您期望您将来的配偶如何处理家庭和工作的关系？

- ☐ (1) 家庭第一 ☐ (2) 工作第一
☐ (3) 兼顾家庭和工作 ☐ (4) 不好说

4、您将来打算要小孩吗？

- ☐ (1) 要，请接着回答下面的问题：
- A、您觉得什么时候要小孩比较合适？
- ☐ (1) 事业发展的初期 ☐ (2) 在事业取得一定成就之后 ☐ (3) 不好说
- B、您预计谁将主要负责照顾小孩？
- ☐ (1) 我自己 ☐ (2) 我的配偶 ☐ (3) 我们的父母
- ☐ (4) 托儿所 ☐ (5) 我不知道
- ☐ (2) 不要

三、就业期望

- 1、您期望第一份正式工作的月薪是多少？
- ☐ (1) 999 元及以下 ☐ (2) 1,000-1,499 元 ☐ (3) 1,500-1,999 元
- ☐ (4) 2,000-2,499 元 ☐ (5) 2,500-2,999 元 ☐ (6) 3,000-3,499 元
- ☐ (7) 3,500-3,999 元 ☐ (8) 4,000-4,499 元 ☐ (9) 4,500 元及以上
- 2、您倾向在哪里工作？
- ☐ (1) 国内，请指出城市或省份名 ()
- ☐ (9) 国外，请指出国家名 ()
- 3、您希望从事以下哪个行业的工作？
- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) 政府机构及社会团体 | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) 文化、艺术和体育部门 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (3) 健康、社会保障和福利部门 | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) 教育 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (5) 市政服务和其他服务 | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) 水利管理及环境保护 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (7) 科研及技术服务 | <input type="checkbox"/> (8) 租赁及商业服务 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (9) 房地产行业 | <input type="checkbox"/> (10) 金融和保险业 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (11) 餐饮及住宿行业 | <input type="checkbox"/> (12) 零售业 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (13) 通信、计算机及软件行业 | <input type="checkbox"/> (14) 交通运输、仓储及邮政行业 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (15) 建筑 | <input type="checkbox"/> (16) 水、电和煤气的生产与供应 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (17) 制造业 | <input type="checkbox"/> (18) 采矿业 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (19) 农、林、牧和渔业 | <input type="checkbox"/> (20) 其他，请指出() |
- 4、如果您选择在上面第 3 题中的“教育”行业工作，请选择您期望在哪种层次的教育机构工作？如果没有选择在“教育”行业工作，请直接跳过本题。
- ☐ (1) 幼儿园 ☐ (2) 小学 ☐ (3) 初中
- ☐ (4) 高中或同等级学校 ☐ (5) 大专或大学
- ☐ (6) 教育培训机构或教育行政部门 ☐ (7) 其他，请指出 ()
- 5、在找工作的过程中，您认为下面哪个因素最重要？
- ☐ (1) 职业门类 ☐ (2) 工作所在地
- ☐ (3) 薪水 ☐ (4) 其他，请指出 ()

6、结合您的实际情况，请对下面的工作性质进行程度判断

工作性质	程度判断	非常重要	重要	一般	不重要	一点也不重要
		5	4	3	2	1
1、有机会运用自己的知识和技能		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2、工作的稳定性		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3、良好的周边环境		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4、有机会进修或者培训		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5、高收入		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6、有挑战性的工作		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7、好的职业声望		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8、较多的休闲时间		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9、能够做些对社会有益的事情		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10、好的工作环境		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11、提升的机会		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12、能够兼顾工作和家庭		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13、大城市（包括省会城市）工作		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14、提供医疗保险、失业保险、住房公积金等社会福利		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15、团队工作		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

四、基本信息

1、性别 ☐ (1) 男 ☐ (2) 女

2、籍贯

(1) 请指出您户籍所在地的省份（或自治区/直辖市）_____

(2) 请选择您的家乡所在地

☐ A、大城市（包括省会城市）

☐ B、中小城市（地级或县级市）

☐ C、县城及乡镇

☐ D、农村

3、父母的工作情况（请指出父母的工作行业。如不清楚所属行业，请写出具体的工作名称，如“大学教师”、“建筑工人”等。如父母失业、退休等，请标明。）

(1) 父亲（ ）

(2) 母亲（ ）

4、父母受教育的水平

父亲

- ☐ (1) 博士
- ☐ (2) 硕士及同等次
- ☐ (3) 本科
- ☐ (4) 专科及相当水平
- ☐ (5) 高中及相当水平
- ☐ (6) 初中
- ☐ (7) 小学
- ☐ (8) 文盲

母亲

- ☐ (1) 博士
- ☐ (2) 硕士及同等次
- ☐ (3) 本科
- ☐ (4) 专科及相当水平
- ☐ (5) 高中及相当水平
- ☐ (6) 初中
- ☐ (7) 小学
- ☐ (8) 文盲

5、您的家庭年毛收入

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) 9,999 元及以下 | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) 10,000-19,999 元 | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) 20,000-29,999 元 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (4) 30,000-39,999 元 | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) 40,000-49,999 元 | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) 50,000-59,999 元 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (7) 60,000-69,999 元 | <input type="checkbox"/> (8) 70,000 元及以上 | <input type="checkbox"/> (9) 我不清楚 |

6、如果您认为还有其它对本科大学毕业生就业期望产生重要影响的因素，请在下面的横线上指出，如果纸张不够，请在本页的反面继续填写。

最后，请问您是否有兴趣参加此次“本科大学毕业生就业期望”的访谈？访谈约持续半个小时，您将收到一定报酬。如果愿意，请留下您的联系方式：

A、姓名：

B、电子邮箱：

C、手机或固定电话号码：

非常感谢您参与本次问卷调查，祝您前程似锦、万事如意！

APPENDIX C:

Consent Form for Interview

1. Title of Research Project

Gender differences in the employment expectations of final year undergraduates in a university in central China

2. Details of Project

The project has been funded by the China Scholarship Council and the University of Edinburgh. The research will explore if there are any gender differences in the employment expectations of final year undergraduates. If so, this study will identify factors that have contributed to the gender differences in the employment expectations.

3. Correspondence Details

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact:

Jian Zhu, PhD Candidate, the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, UK EH8 8AQ

Tel: 44 (0)131 6516695 or email: jian.zhu@education.ed.ac.uk

4. Confidentiality

Interview records and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them. However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below).

5. Anonymity

Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name.

6. Consent

I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewers.

TICK HERE: ☐ **DATE**

Note: Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data

Name of interviewee:

Signature:

Email/phone:

Signature of researcher:.....

2 copies to be signed by both the interviewee and researcher, and each keeps one copy.

APPENDIX D:

访谈承诺书

亲爱的大四同学：

非常感谢您参与本次访谈！

我是朱剑，现在在英国爱丁堡大学教育学院攻读博士学位。我目前正在研究一项“大学生就业期望的性别差异”的课题。本课题主要关注以下问题：本科大学毕业生在就业期望上是否存在性别差异？如果存在的话，有哪些因素影响了这些性别差异？您的合作对本次调研活动具有极其重要的影响！

我承诺，我会严格保密所有的访谈录音材料和文字材料，且这些材料仅为本次调研所用！如果您需要此材料，我可以给您一份。同时，您提供的信息将会被匿名处理，因此您不用担心您的名字会出现在调研报告中！

承诺：

我自愿参与本次访谈，我同意将我提供的信息用于本次调研活动。只要我愿意，我可以随时退出本调研。

是 ☐

否 ☐

日期： 年 月 日

被访谈者签名：

访谈者签名：

注：本承诺书一式两份，访谈者和被访谈者各持一份。

APPENDIX E:

Interview Schedule

1. Background

1. Could you please tell me your motivations of having a higher education?
2. Could you please tell me something more about your family backgrounds and parents' expectations for your employment?
3. How do you usually look for a job?
4. How much time and money have you spent so far in finding a job?

2. Employment expectations

1. How do you finalise your employment expectations (salary, occupation and working region)?
2. You have chosen ** as the most important factor when you seek for a job, could you please tell me why?
3. You have chosen ** as your occupation, has your major affected your occupational expectation?
4. You are/are not a CPC member, has the CPC membership affected your employment conditions when you seek for a job?

3. Gender

1. Do you think women's and men's jobs are influenced by their genders today? Why?
2. What is your idea about the relationship between family and work?
3. The survey shows, male final year undergraduates had higher salary expectations than their female counterparts. What is your idea about the finding?

4. Concluding question

Do you think it is really difficult for university students to find a job?

Thanks very much for your participation and all the best!

APPENDIX F:

本科大学毕业生就业期望的性别差异访谈提纲

一、 背景

- 1、能否谈谈您当初上大学的动机？
- 2、能否谈谈您的家庭背景及父母对您找工作的期望？
- 3、您通常是通过什么途径找工作的？
- 4、到目前为止，您在找工作上花了多少时间和费用？

二、 就业期望

- 1、您是如何确定自己的就业期望（薪水、行业和工作区域）？有哪些因素影响了您做决定？
- 2、在找工作过程中，您认为（薪水/行业/工作区域/其他）最重要，能谈谈为什么吗？
- 3、您把***作为即将从事的行业，您认为大学期间所学的专业对您的行业选择是否有影响？
- 4、您是/不是一个共产党员，您认为它对您找工作有影响吗？

三、 性别问题

- 1、就您遇到的实际情况而言，您认为性别对找工作有影响吗？
- 2、能否谈谈您是怎样看待家庭和工作的关系？
- 3、就本次调查的结果而言，男大学生的薪水期望高于女大学生。您如何看待这种现象？

四、 结束性问题

您觉得大学生真的很难找到工作吗？如果是，能够分析一下原因吗？如果不是，您觉得该做何解释？

非常感谢您参与本次访谈，祝您一切顺利！